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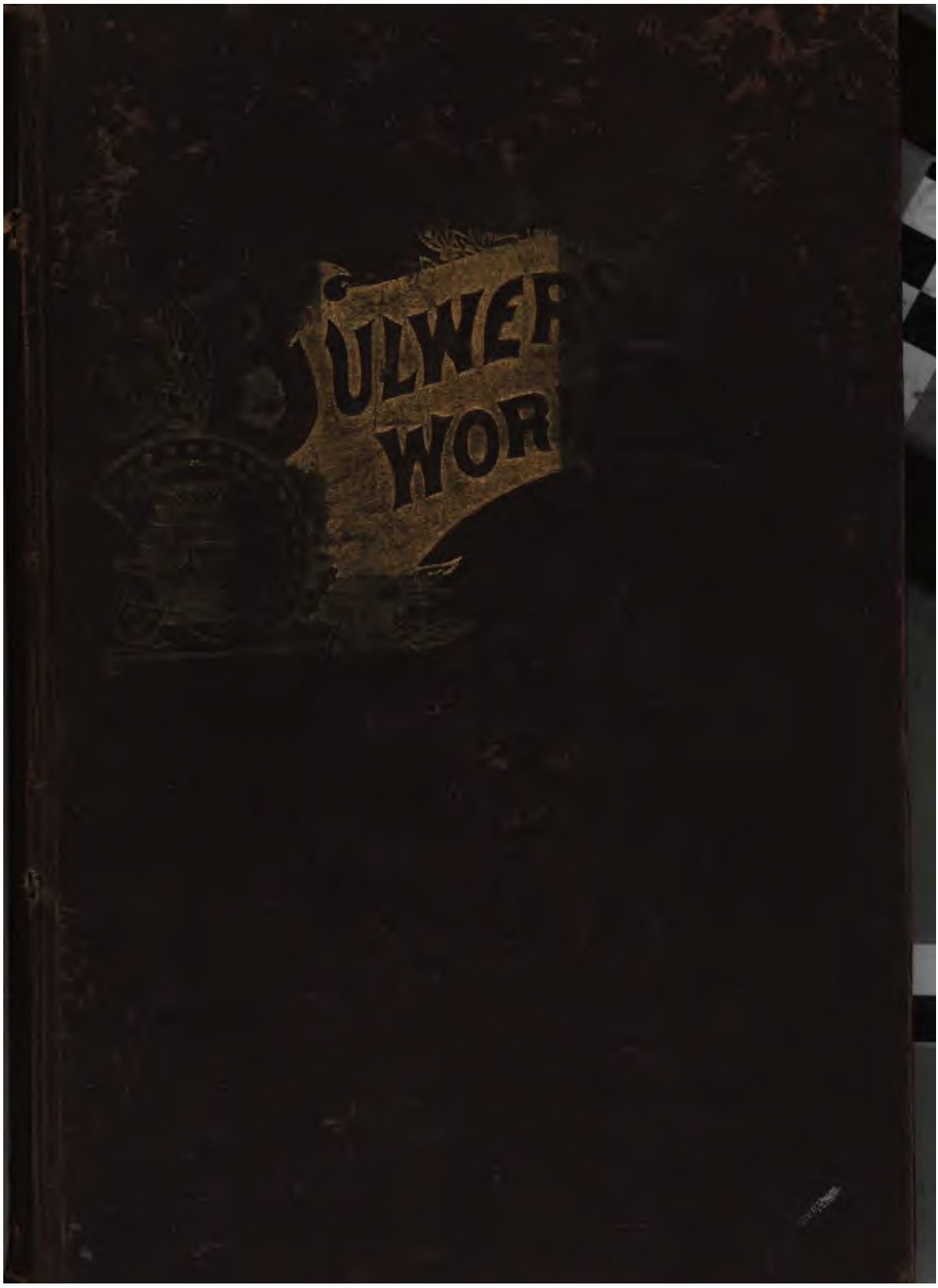
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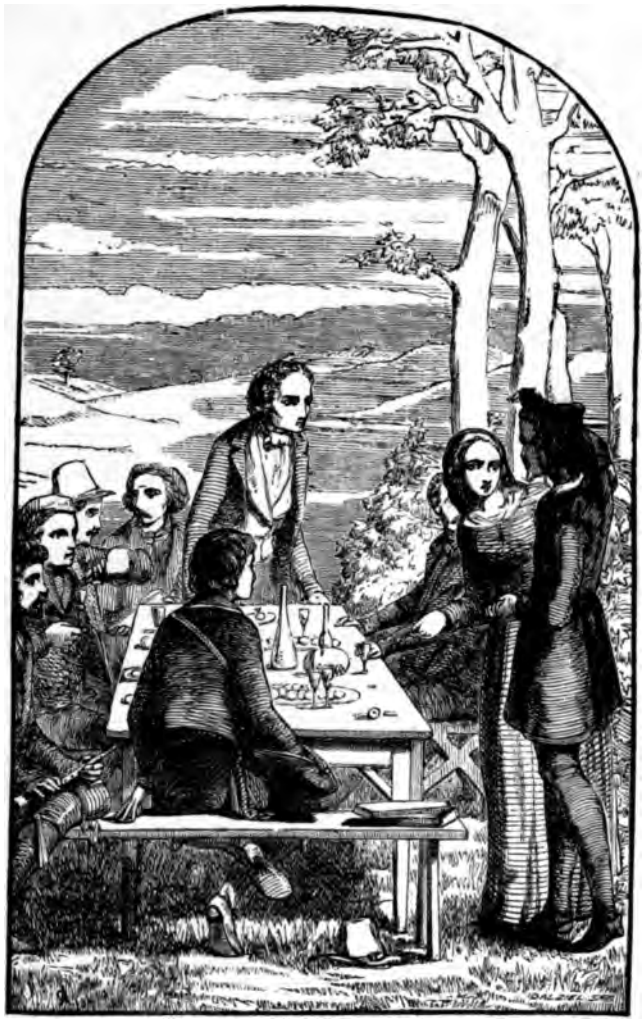
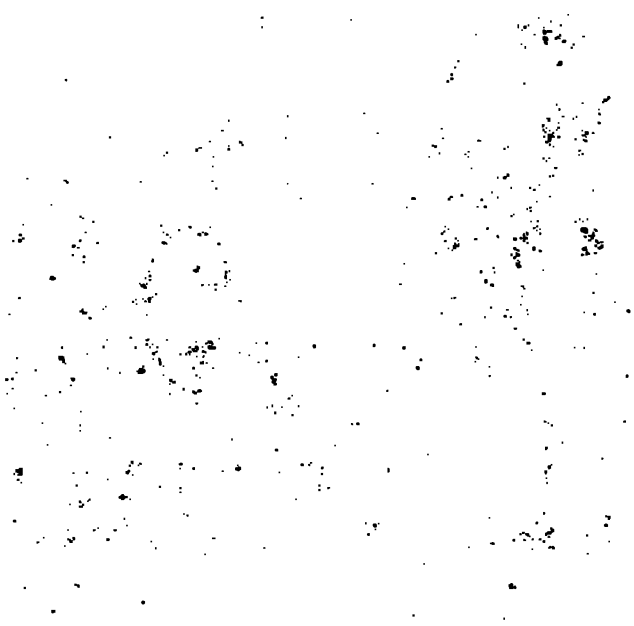


ERNEST MALTRAVERS.

THE WORKS

OF



THE WORKS

OF

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

(LORD LYTTON)

ERNEST MALTRAVERS.

ALICE; OR, THE MYSTERIES.

PAUSANIAS, THE SPARTAN.

LUCRETIA; OR, THE CHILDREN OF NIGHT.

VOLUME VI.

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ERNEST MALTRAVERS.

TO

THE GREAT GERMAN PEOPLE,

A RACE OF THINKERS AND OF CRITICS;

A Foreign but Familiar Audience, Profound in Judgment, Candid in Reproof, Generous in Appreciation,

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED,

BY AN ENGLISH AUTHOR.

A WORD TO THE READER.

PREFIXED TO THE FIRST EDITION OF 1837.

THOU must not, my old and partial friend, look into this work for that species of interest which is drawn from stirring adventures and a perpetual variety of incident. To a Novel of the present day are necessarily forbidden the animation, the excitement, the bustle, the pomp, and the stage-effect which History affords to Romance. Whatever merits, in thy gentle eyes, "Rienzi," or "The Last Days of Pompeii," may have possessed, this Tale, if it please thee at all, must owe that happy fortune to qualities widely different from those which won thy favor to pictures of the Past. Thou must sober down thine imagination, and prepare thyself for a story not dedicated to the narrative of extraordinary events — nor the elucidation of the characters of great men. Though there is scarcely a page in this work episodical to the main design, there may be much that may seem to thee wearisome and prolix, if thou wilt not lend thyself, in a kindly spirit, and with a generous trust, to the guidance of the Author. In the hero of this tale thou wilt find neither a majestic demigod, nor a fascinating demon. He is a man with the weaknesses derived from humanity, with the strength that we inherit from the soul; not often obstinate in error, more often irresolute in virtue; sometimes too aspiring, sometimes too despondent: influenced by the circumstances to which he yet struggless to be superior, and changing in character with the changes of time and fate; but never wantonly rejecting those great principles by which alone we can work out the Science of Life—a desire for the Good, a passion for the Honest, a yearning after the True. From such principles, Experience, that severe Mentor, teaches us at length the safe and practical philosophy which consists of Fortitude to bear, Serenity to enjoy, and Faith to look beyond!

It would have led, perhaps, to more striking

incidents, and have furnished an interest more intense, if I had cast Maltravers, the Man of Genius, amidst those fierce but ennobling struggles with poverty and want to which genius is so often condemned. But wealth and lassitude have their temptations as well as penury and toil. And for the rest—I have taken much of my tale and many of my characters from real life, and would not unnecessarily seek other fountains when the Well of Truth was in my reach.

The author has said his say, he retreats once more into silence and into shade, he leaves you alone with the creations he has called to life—the representatives of his emotions and his thoughts—the intermediators between the individual and the crowd:—Children not of the clay, but of the spirit, may they be faithful to their origin!—so should they be monitors, not loud but deep, of the world into which they are cast, struggling against the obstacles that will beset them, for the heritage of their parent—the right to survive the grave!

LONDON, *August* 12,

BOOK FIRST.

Τὸ γαρ νεάζον ἐν τοιοῖσδε βόσκεται
Χώροισιν αὐτοῦρ· καὶ νιν οὐ θέλπος θεοῦ
Οὐδ' ὄμβρος, οὐδὲ πνευμάτων οὐδὲν κλονεῖ
Ἀλλ' ἡδοναῖς ἄμοχθον ἐξαίρει βίον.

SOPH. *Trachin.* 144.

Youth pastures in a valley of its own:
The glare of noon—the rains and winds of heaven
Mar not the calm yet virgin of all care.
But ever with sweet joys it buildeth up
The airy halls of life."

CHAPTER I.

"My meaning in 't, I protest, was very honest in the behalf of the main * * * yes, who would have suspected an ambush where I was taken?"

—*All's Well that Ends Well*, Act. iv. Sc. 3.

SOME four miles distant from one of our northern manufacturing towns, in the year 18— was a wide and desolate common; a more dreary spot it is impossible to conceive—the herbage grew up in sickly patches from the midst of a black and stony soil. Not a tree was to be seen in the whole of the comfortless expanse. Nature herself had seemed to desert the solitude, as if scared by the ceaseless din of the neighboring forges; and even Art, which presses all things into service, had disdained to cull use or beauty from these unpromising demesnes. There was something weird and primeval in the aspect of the place; especially when in the long nights of winter you beheld the distant fires and lights, which give to the vicinity of certain manufactories so preternatural an appearance, streaming red and wild over the waste. So abandoned by man appeared the spot, that you found it difficult to imagine that it was only from human fires that its bleak and barren desolation was illumed. For miles along the moor you detected no vestige of any habitation; but as you approached the verge nearest to the town, you could just perceive at a little distance from the main road, by which the common was intersected, a small, solitary, and miserable hovel.

Within this lonely abode, at the time in which my story opens, were seated two persons. The one was a man of about fifty years of age, and in a squalid and wretched garb, which was yet relieved by an affectation of ill-assorted finery. A silk handkerchief, which boasted the ornament of a large brooch of false stones, was twisted jauntily round a muscular but meagre throat; his tattered breeches was also decorated by buckles, one of pinchbeck, and one of steel. His frame was lean, but broad and sinewy, indicative of considerable strength. His countenance was prematurely marked by deep furrows, and his grizzled hair waved over a low, rugged, and forbidding brow, on which there hung an everlasting frown that no smile from the lips (and the man smiled often) could chase away. It was a face that spoke of long-continued and hardened vice—it was one in which the Past had written the indelible characters. The brand of the hangman could not have stamped it more plainly, nor have more unequivocally warned the suspicion of honest or timid men.

He was employed in counting some few and paltry coins, which, though an easy matter to ascertain their value, he told and retold, as if the act could increase the amount. "There must be some mistake here, Alice," he said, in a low and muttered tone: "we can't be so low—you know I had two pounds in the

drawer out Monday, and now——Alice, you must have stolen some of the money—curse you."

The person thus addressed sate at the opposite side of the smouldering and sullen fire; she now looked quietly up,—and her face singularly contrasted that of the man.

She seemed about fifteen years of age, and her complexion was remarkably pure and delicate, even despite the sunburnt tinge which her habits of toil had brought it. Her auburn hair hung in loose and natural curls over her forehead, and its luxuriance was remarkable even in one so young. Her countenance was beautiful, nay, even faultless, in its small and child-like features, but the expression pained you—it was so vacant. In repose it was almost the expression of an idiot—but when she spoke, or smiled, or even moved a muscle, the eyes, color, lips, kindled into a life which proved that the intellect was still there, though but imperfectly awakened. . . . .

"I did not steal any, father," she said, in a quiet voice; "but I should like to have taken some, only I knew you would beat me if I did."

"And what do you want money for?"

"To get food when I'm hungered."

"Nothing else?"

"I don't know."

The girl paused.—"Why don't you let me," she said after a while, "why don't you let me go and work with the other girls at the factory? I should make money there for you and me both."

The man smiled—such a smile—it seemed to bring into sudden play all the revolting characteristics of his countenance. "Child," he said, "you are just fifteen, and a sad fool you are: perhaps if you went to the factory, you would get away from me; and what should I do without you? No, I think, as you are so pretty, you might get more money another way."

The girl did not seem to understand this allusion; but repeated, vacantly, "I should like to go to the factory."

"Stuff!" said the man, angrily, "I have three minds to——"

Here he was interrupted by a loud knock at the door of the hovel.

The man grew pale. "What can that be?" he muttered. "The hour is late—near eleven. Again—again! Ask who knocks, Alice."

The girl stood for a moment or so at the door; and as she stood, her form, rounded yet slight, her earnest look, her varying color, her tender youth, and a singular grace of attitude and gesture, would have inspired an artist with the very ideal of rustic beauty.

After a pause she placed her lips to a chink in the door, and repeated her father's question.

"Pray pardon me," said a clear, loud, yet courteous voice, "but seeing a light at your window, I have ventured to ask if any one within will conduct me to * * * *; I will pay the service handsomely."

"Open the door, Alley," said the owner of the hut.

The girl drew a large wooden bolt from the door; and a tall figure crossed the threshold.

The new-comer was in the first bloom of youth, perhaps about eighteen years of age, and his air and appearance surprised both sire and daughter. Alone, on foot, at such an hour, it was impossible for any one to mistake him for other than a gentleman; yet his dress was plain, and somewhat soiled by dust, and he carried a small knapsack on his shoulder. As he entered, he lifted his hat with somewhat of foreign urbanity, and a profusion of fair brown hair fell partially over a high and commanding forehead. His features were handsome, without being eminently so, and his aspect was at once bold and prepossessing.

"I am much obliged by your civility," he said, advancing carelessly, and addressing the man, who surveyed him with a scrutinizing eye; "and trust, my good fellow, that you will increase the obligation by accompanying me to * * * *."

"You can't miss well your way, said the man surlily; "the lights will direct you."

"They have rather misled me, for they seem to surround the whole common, and there is no path across it that I can see; however, if you will put me in the right road, I will not trouble you further."

"It is very late," replied the churlish landlord, equivocally.

"The better reason why I should be at * * * *. Come, my good friend, put on your hat, and I'll give you half-a-guinea for your trouble."

The man advanced; then halted; again sur-

veyed his guest, and said, "Are you quite alone, sir?"

"Quite."

"Probably you are known at * * * *?"

"Not I. But what matters that to you? I am a stranger in these parts."

"It is full four miles."

"So far, and I am fearfully tired already!" exclaimed the young man, with impatience. As he spoke, he drew out his watch. "Past eleven, too!"

The watch caught the eye of the cottager; that evil eye sparkled. He passed his hand over his brow. "I am thinking, sir," he said, in a more civil tone than he had yet assumed, "that as you are so tired, and the hour is so late, you might almost as well——"

"What?" exclaimed the stranger, stamping somewhat petulantly.

"I don't like to mention it; but my poor roof is at your service, and I would go with you to * * * * at day-break to-morrow."

The stranger stared at the cottager, and then at the dingy walls of the hut. He was about, very abruptly, to reject the hospitable proposal, when his eye rested suddenly on the form of Alice, who stood, eager-eyed, and open-mouthed, gazing on the handsome intruder. As she caught his eye, she blushed deeply, and turned aside. The view seemed to change the intentions of the stranger. He hesitated a moment; then muttered between his teeth: and sinking his knapsack on the ground, he cast himself into a chair beside the fire, stretched his limbs, and cried gaily. "So be it, my host: shut up your house again. Bring me a cup of beer, and a crust of bread, and so much for supper! As for bed, this chair will do vastly well."

"Perhaps we can manage better for you than that chair," answered the host. "But our best accommodation must seem bad enough to a gentleman: we are very poor people—hard working, but very poor."

Never mind me," answered the stranger, busying himself in stirring the fire; "I am tolerably well accustomed to greater hardships than sleeping on a chair, in an honest man's house; and though you are poor, I will take it for granted you are honest."

The man grinned; and turning to Alice, bade her spread what their larder would afford. Some crusts of bread, some cold potatoes, and some tolerably strong beer, composed all the fare set before the traveller.

Despite his prevous boasts, the young man made a wry face at these Socratic preparations, while he drew his chair to the board. But his look grew more gay as he caught Alice's eye; and as she lingered by the table, and faltered out some hesitating words of apology, he seized her hand and pressed it tenderly—"Prettiest of lasses," said he—and while he spoke he gazed on her with undisguised admiration—"a man who has travelled on foot all day, through the ugliest country within the three seas, is sufficiently refreshed at night by the sight of so fair a face."

Alice hastily withdrew her hand, and went and seated herself in a corner of the room, whence she continued to look at the stranger with her usual vacant gaze, but with a half smile upon her rosy lips.

Alice's father looked hard first at one, then at the other.

"Eat, sir," said he, with a sort of chuckle, "and no fine words; poor Alice is honest, as you said just now."

"To be sure," answered the traveller, employing with a great zeal a set of strong, even, and dazzling teeth at the tough crusts; "to be sure she is. I do not mean to offend you; but the fact is, that I am half a foreigner, and abroad, you know, one may say a civil thing to a pretty girl, without hurting her feelings, or her father's either."

"Half a foreigner! why you talk English as well as I do;" said the host, whose intonation and words were, on the whole, a little above his station.

The stranger smiled. "Thank you for the compliment," said he. "What I meant was, that I have been a great deal abroad; in fact, I have just returned from Germany. But I am English-born."

"And going home?"

"Yes."

"Far from hence?"

"About thirty miles, I believe.'

"You are young, sir, to be alone.

The traveller made no answer, but finished his uninviting repast, and drew his chair again to the fire. He then thought he had sufficiently ministered to his host's curiosity to be entitled to the gratification of his own.

"You work at the factories, I suppose?" said he.

"I do, sir. Bad times."

"And your pretty daughter?"

"Minds the house."

"Have you no other children?"

"No; one mouth besides my own is as much as I can feed, and that scarcely. But you would like to rest now: you can have my bed, sir—I can sleep here."

"By no means," said the stranger, quickly; "just put a few more coals on the fire, and leave me to make myself comfortable."

The man rose, and did not press his offer, but left the room for a supply of fuel. Alice remained in her corner.

"Sweetheart," said the traveller, looking round, and satisfying himself that they were alone; "I should sleep well if I could get one kiss from those coral lips."

Alice hid her face with her hands.

"Do I vex you?"

"O no, sir."

At this assurance the traveller rose, and approached Alice softly. He drew away her hands from her face, when she said gently, "Have you much money about you?"

"O the mercenary baggage!" said the traveller to himself; and then replied, aloud, "Why, pretty one?—Do you sell your kisses so high then?"

Alice frowned, and tossed the hair from her brow. "If you have money," she said in a whisper, "don't say so to father. Don't sleep if you can help it. I'm afraid—hush—he comes!"

The young man returned to his seat with an altered manner. And as his host entered, he for the first time surveyed him closely. The imperfect glimmer of the half-dying and single candle threw into strong lights and shades the marked, rugged, and ferocious features of the cottager; and the eye of the traveller, glancing from the face to the limbs and frame, saw that whatever of violence the mind might design, the body might well execute.

The traveller sank into a gloomy reverie. The wind howled—the rain beat—through the casement shone no solitary star—all was dark and sombre;—should he proceed alone—might he not suffer a greater danger upon that wide and desert moor—might not the host follow—assault him in the dark? He had no weapon, save a stick. But within, he had at least a rude resource in the large kitchen poker that was beside him. At all events, it would be better to wait for the present. He might at any time, when alone, withdraw the bolt from the door, and slip out unobserved.

Such was the fruit of his meditations while his host plied the fire.

"You will sleep sound to-night," said his entertainer, smiling.

"Humph! Why I am *over*-fatigued; I dare say it will be an hour or two before I fall asleep; but when I once *am* asleep, I sleep like a rock!"

"Come, Alice," said her father, "let us leave the gentleman. Good night, sir."

"Good night—good night, returned the traveller, yawning.

The father and daughter disappeared through a door in the corner of the room. The guest heard them ascend the creaking stairs—all was still.

"Fool that I am," said the traveller to himself, "will nothing teach me that I am no longer a student at Gottingen, or cure me of these pedestrian adventures? Had it not been for that girl's big blue eyes, I should be safe at **** by this time; if, indeed, the grim father had not murdered me by the road. However, we'll balk him yet; another half-hour, and I am on the moor: we must give him time. And in the meanwhile here is the poker. At the worst it is but one to one; but the churl is strongly built."

Although the traveller thus endeavored to cheer his courage, his heart beat more loudly than its wont. He kept his eyes stationed on the door by which the cottagers had vanished, and his hand on the massive poker.

While the stranger was thus employed below, Alice, instead of turning to her own narrow cell, went into her father's room.

The cottager was seated at the foot of his bed, muttering to himself, and with eyes fixed on the ground.

The girl stood before him, gazing on his face, and with her arms lightly crossed above her bosom.

"It must be worth twenty guineas," said the host, abruptly to himself.

"What is it to you, father, what the gentleman's watch is worth?"

The man started.

"You mean," continued Alice, quietly, "you mean to do some injury to that young man; but you shall not."

The cottager's face grew black as night. "How," he began in a loud voice, but suddenly dropped the tone into a deep growl—"how dare you talk to me so?—go to bed—go to bed."

"No, father."

"No?"

"I will not stir from this room until day-break."

"We will soon see that," said the man, with an oath.

"Touch me, and I will alarm the gentleman, and tell him that——"

"What?"

The girl approached her father, placed her lips to his ear, and whispered, "that you intend to murder him."

The cottager's frame trembled from head to foot; he shut his eyes, and gasped painfully for breath. "Alice," said he, gently, after a pause—"Alice, we are often nearly starving."

"*I* am—*you* never!"

"Wretch, yes! if I do drink too much-one day, I pinch for it the next. But go to bed, I say—I mean no harm to the young man. Think you I would twist myself a rope?—no, no;—go along, go along."

Alice's face, which had before been earnest and almost intelligent, now relapsed into its wonted vacant stare.

"To be sure, father, they would hang you if you cut his throat. Don't forget that;—good night;"—and so saying, she walked to her own opposite chamber.

Left alone, the host pressed his hand tightly to his forehead, and remained motionless for nearly half-an-hour.

"If that cursed girl would but sleep," he muttered at last, turning round, "it might be done at once. And there's the pond behind, as deep as a well; and I might say at day-break that the boy had bolted. He seems quite a stranger here—nobody 'll miss him. He must have plenty of blunt to give half-a-guinea to a guide across a common! I want money, and I won't work—if I can help it, at least."

While he thus soliloquized, the air seemed to oppress him; he opened the window, he leant out—the rain beat upon him. He closed the window with an oath; took off his shoes, stole to the threshold, and, by the candle which he shaded with his hand, surveyed the opposite door. It was closed. He then bent anxiously forward and listened.

"All's quiet," thought he, "perhaps he sleeps already. I will steal down. If Jack Walters would but come to-night, the job would be done charmingly."

With that he crept gently down the stairs. In a corner, at the foot of the staircase, lay sundry matters, a few faggots, and a cleaver. He caught up the last. "Aha," he muttered; "and there's the sledge-hammer somewhere for Walters." Leaning himself against the door, he then applied his eye to a chink which admitted a dim view of the room within, lighted fitfully by the fire.

CHAPTER II.

What have we here?
A carrion death!"
—*Merchant of Venice*, Act. ii. Sc. 7.

It was about this time that the stranger deemed it advisable to commence his retreat. The slight and suppressed sound of voices, which at first he had heard above in the conversation of the father and child, had died away. The stillness at once encouraged and warned him. He stole to the front door, softly undid the bolt, and found the door locked, and the key missing. He had not observed that during his repast, and ere his suspicions had been aroused, his host, in replacing the bar, and relocking the entrance, had abstracted the key. His fears were now confirmed. His next thought was the window—the shutter only protected it half way, and was easily removed; but the aperture of the lattice, which only opened in part, like most cottage casements, was far too small to admit his person. His only means of escape was in breaking the whole window; a matter not to be effected without noise, and consequent risk.

He paused in despair. He was naturally of a strong-nerved and gallant temperament, nor unaccustomed to those perils of life and limb which German students delight to brave; but

his heart well-nigh failed him at that moment. The silence became distinct and burdensome to him, and a chill moisture gathered to his brow. While he stood irresolute and in suspense, striving to collect his thoughts, his ear, preternaturally sharpened by fear, caught the faint muffled sound of creeping footsteps—he heard the stairs creak. The sound broke the spell. The previous vague apprehension gave way, when the danger became actually at hand. His presence of mind returned at once. He went back quickly to the fire-place, seized the poker, and began stirring the fire, and coughing loud, and indicating as vigorously as possible that he was wide awake.

He felt that he was watched—he felt that he was in momentary peril. He felt that the appearance of slumber would be the signal for a mortal conflict. Time passed, all remained silent: nearly half-an-hour had elapsed since he had heard the steps upon the stairs. His situation began to prey upon his nerves, it irritated them—it became intolerable. It was not, now, fear that he experienced, it was the overwrought sense of mortal enmity—the consciousness that a man may feel who knows that the eye of a tiger is on him, and who, while in suspense he has regained his courage, foresees that sooner or later the spring must come;—the suspense itself becomes an agony, and he desires to expedite the deadly struggle he cannot shun.

Utterly incapable any longer to bear his own sensations, the traveller rose at last, fixed his eyes upon the fatal door, and was about to cry aloud to the listener to enter, when he heard a slight tap at the window; it was twice repeated; and at third time a low voice pronounced the name of Darvil. It was clear, then, that accomplices had arrived; it was no longer against one man that he should have to contend. He drew his breath hard, and listened with throbbing ears. He heard steps without upon the plashing soil; they retired—all was still.

He paused a few minutes, and walked deliberately and firmly to the inner door at which he fancied his host stationed; with a steady hand he attempted to open the door; it was fastened on the opposite side. "So!" said he, bitterly, and grinding his teeth; "I must die like a rat in a cage. Well, I'll die biting."

He returned to his former post, drew himself up to his full height, and stood grasping his homely weapon, prepared for the worst, and not altogether unelated with a proud consciousness of his own natural advantages of activity, stature, strength, and daring. Minutes rolled on! the silence was broken by some one at the inner door; he heard the bolt gently withdrawn. He raised his weapon with both hands; and started to find the intruder was only Alice. She came in with bare feet, and pale as marble, her finger on her lips.

She approached—she touched him.

"They are in the shed behind," she whispered, "looking for the sledge-hammer—they mean to murder you; get you gone—quick."

"How?—the door is locked."

"Stay. I have taken the key from his room."

She gained the door, applied the key—the door yielded. The traveller threw his knapsack once more over his shoulder and made but one stride to the threshold. The girl stopped him. "Don't say anything about it; he is my father, they would hang him."

"No, no. But you?—are safe, I trust?—depend on my gratitude.—I shall be at * * * * to-morrow—the best inn—seek me if you can! Which way now?"

"Keep to the left."

The stranger was already several paces distant; through the darkness, and in the midst of the rain, he fled on with the speed of youth. The girl lingered an instant, sighed, then laughed aloud; closed and re-barred the door, and was creeping back, when from the inner entrance advanced the grim father, and another man, of broad, short, sinewy frame, his arms bare, and wielding a large hammer.

"How?" asked the host; "Alice here, and—hell and the devil! have you let him go?"

"I told you that you should not harm him."

With a violent oath, the ruffian struck his daughter to the ground, sprang over her body, unbarred the door, and accompanied by his comrade, set off in vague pursuit of his intended victim.

CHAPTER III.

"You knew—none so well, of my daughter's flight."
—*Merchant of Venice*, Act. iii. Sc. 1.

THE day dawned; it was a mild, damp, hazy morning; the sod sank deep beneath the foot, the roads were heavy with mire, and the rain of the past night lay here and there in broad shallow pools. Towards the town, wagons, carts, pedestrian groups were already moving; and, now and then, you caught the sharp horn of some early coach, wheeling its be-cloaked outside, and be-nightcapped inside passengers along the northern thoroughfare.

A young man bounded over a style into the road just opposite to the mile-stone, that declared him to be one mile from * * * *.

"Thank Heaven!" he said, almost aloud. "After spending the night wandering about morasses like a will-o'-the-wisp, I approach a town at last. Thank Heaven again, and for all its mercies this night! I breathe freely. I AM SAFE."

He walked on somewhat rapidly; he passed a slow wagon—he passed a group of mechanics—he passed a drove of sheep, and now he saw walking leisurely before him a single figure. It was a girl, in a worn and humble dress; who seemed to seek her weary way with pain and languor. He was about also to pass her, when he heard a low cry. He turned, and beheld in the wayfarer his preserver of the previous night.

"Heavens! is it indeed you? Can I believe my eyes?"

"I was coming to seek you, sir," said the girl, faintly. "I too have escaped; I shall never go back to father, I have no roof to cover my head now."

"Poor child! but how is this? Did they ill-use you for releasing me?"

"Father knocked me down, and beat me again when he came back; but that is not all," she added in a very low tone.

"What else?"

The girl grew red and white by turns. She set her teeth rigidly, stopped short, and then walking on quicker than before, replied,—"It don't matter; I will never go back—I'm alone now. What, what shall I do?" and she wrung her hands.

The traveller's pity was deeply moved. "My good girl," said he, earnestly, "you have saved my life, and I am not ungrateful. Here" (and he placed some gold in her hand), "get yourself a lodging, food, and rest; you look as if you wanted them; and see me again this evening when it is dark, and we can talk unobserved."

The girl took the money passively, and looked up in his face while he spoke; the look was so unsuspecting, and the whole countenance was so beautifully modest and virgin-like, that had any evil passion prompted the traveller's last words, it must have fled scared and abashed as he met the gaze.

"My poor girl," said he, embarrassed, and after a short pause;—"you are very young, and very, very pretty. In this town you will be exposed to many temptations: take care where you lodge; you have, no doubt, friends here?"

"Friends?—what are friends?" answered Alice.

"Have you no relations; no *mother's kin?*"

"None."

"Do you know where to ask shelter?"

"No sir; for I can't go where father goes, lest he should find me out."

"Well, then seek some quiet inn, and meet me this evening, just here, half-a-mile from the town, at seven. I will try and think of something for you in the meanwhile. But you seem tired, you walk with pain; perhaps it will fatigue you to come—I mean, you had rather perhaps rest another day."

"Oh! no, no! it will do me good to see you again, sir."

The young man's eyes met hers, and hers were not withdrawn; their soft blue was suffused with tears—they penetrated his soul.

He turned away hastily, and saw that they were already the subject of curious observation to the various passengers that overtook them. "Don't forget!" he whispered, and strode on with a pace that soon brought him to the town.

He inquired for the principal hotel—entered it with an air that bespoke that nameless consciousness of superiority, which belongs to those accustomed to purchase welcome, wherever welcome is bought and sold—and before a blazing fire and no unsubstantial breakfast, forgot all the terrors of the past night, or rather felt rejoiced to think he had added a a new and strange hazard to the catalogue of

adventures already experienced by Ernest Maltravers.

CHAPTER IV.

"Con una Dama tenia
Un galan conversacion."*
—MORATIN: *El Teatro Espanol.*—Num. 15.

MALTRAVERS was first at the appointed place. His character was in most respects singularly energetic, decided, and premature in its development; but not so in regard to women: with them he was the creature of the moment; and, driven to and fro by whatever impulse, or whatever passion, caught the caprice of a wild, roving, and all-poetical imagination, Maltravers was, half unconsciously, a poet—a poet of action, and woman was his muse.

He had formed no plan of conduct towards the poor girl he was too meet. He meant no harm to her. If she had been less handsome, he would have been equally grateful; and her dress, and youth, and condition, would equally have compelled him to select the hour of dusk for an interview.

He arrived at the spot. The winter night had already descended; but a sharp frost had set in: the air was clear, the stars were bright. and the long shadows slept, still and calm, along the broad road, and the whitened fields beyond.

He walked briskly to and fro, without much thought of the interview, or its object, half chanting old verses, German and English, to himself, and stopping to gaze every moment at the silent stars.

At length he saw Alice approach: she came up to him timidly and gently. His heart beat more quickly; he felt that he was young, and alone with beauty. "Sweet girl," he said, with involuntary and mechanical compliment, "how well this light becomes you! How shall I thank you for not forgetting me?"

Alice surrendered her hand to his without a struggle.

"What is your name?" said he, bending his face down to hers.

"Alice Darvil."

"And your terrible father,—*is* he, in truth, your father?"

"Indeed he is my father and mother too?"

"What made you suspect his intention to murder me? Has he ever attempted the like crime?"

"No; but lately he has often talked of robbery. He is very poor, sir. And when I saw his eye, and when afterwards, while your back was turned, he took the key from the door, I felt that—that you were in danger."

"Good girl—go on."

"I told him so when we went up stairs. I did not know what to believe, when he said he would not hurt you; but I stole the key of the front door, which he had thrown on the table, and went to my room. I listened at my door; I heard him go down the stairs; he stopped there for some time; and I watched him from above. The place where he was, opened to the field by the backway. After some time, I heard a voice whisper him: I knew the voice, and then they both went out by the backway; so I stole down; and went out and listened; and I knew the other man was John Walters. I'm afraid of *him*, sir. And then Walters said, says he, 'I will get the hammer, and, sleep or wake, we'll do it.' And father said, 'It's in the shed.' So I saw there was no time to be lost, sir, and—and—but you know all the rest."

"But how did you escape?"

"Oh, my father, after talking to Walters, came to my room, and beat and—and frightened me; and when he was gone to bed, I put on my clothes and stole out; it was just light; and I walked on till I met you."

"Poor child, in what a den of vice you have been brought up!"

"Anan, sir."

"She don't understand me. Have you been taught to read and write?"

"Oh, no!"

"But I suppose you have been taught, at least, to say your catechism—and you pray sometimes?"

"I have prayed to father not to beat me."

"But to God?"

"God, sir!—what is that?" *

Maltravers drew back, shocked and ap-

* With a dame he held a gallant conversation.

* This ignorance—indeed the whole sketch of Alice—is from the life; nor is such ignorance, accompanied by what almost seems an instinctive or intuitive notion of right or wrong, very uncommon as our police reports can testify. In the *Examiner* for, I think, the year 1835, will be found the case of a young girl ill-treated by her father, whose answers to the interrogatories of the magistrate are very similar to those of Alice to the questions of Maltravers.

palled. Premature philosopher as he was, this depth of ignorance perplexed his wisdom. He had read all the disputes of schoolmen, whether or not the notion of a Supreme Being is innate; but he had never before been brought face to face with a living creature, who was unconscious of a God.

After a pause, he said—"My poor girl, we misunderstand each other. You know that there is a God?"

"No, sir."

"Did no one ever tell you who made the stars you now survey—the earth on which you tread?"

"No."

"And have you never thought about it yourself?"

"Why should I? What has that to do with being cold and hungry?"

Maltravers looked incredulous.—"You see that great building, with the spire rising in the starlight?"

"Yes, sir, sure."

"What is it called?"

"Why, a church."

"Did you ever go into it?"

"No."

"What do people do there?"

"Father says one man talks nonsense, and the other folk listen to him."

"Your father is —— no matter. Good heavens! what shall I do with this unhappy child?"

"Yes, sir, I am very unhappy," said Alice, catching at the last words; and the tears rolled silently down her cheeks.

Maltravers never was more touched in his life. Whatever thoughts of gallantry might have entered his young head, had he found Alice such as he might reasonably have expected, he now felt there was a kind of sanctity in her ignorance; and his gratitude and kindly sentiment towards her took almost a brotherly aspect.—"You know, at least, what school is?" he asked.

"Yes, I have talked with girls who go to school."

"Would you like to go there, too?"

"Oh, no, sir—pray not!"

"What should you like to do then?—Speak out, child. I owe you so much, that I should be too happy to make you comfortable and contented in your own way."

"I should like to live with you, sir." Maltravers started, and half smiled, and colored. But looking on her eyes, which were fixed earnestly on his, there was so much artlessness in their soft, unconscious gaze, that he saw she was wholly ignorant of the interpretation that might be put upon so candid a confession.

I have said that Maltravers was a wild, enthusiastic, odd being—he was in fact, full of strange German romance and metaphysical speculations. He had once shut himself up for months to study astrology—and been even suspected of a serious hunt after the philosopher's stone; another time he had narrowly escaped with life and liberty from a frantic conspiracy of the young republicans of his university, in which, being bolder and madder than most of them, he had been an active ringleader; it was, indeed, some such folly that had compelled him to quit Germany sooner than himself or his parents desired. He had nothing of the sober Englishman about him. Whatever was strange and eccentric had an irresistible charm for Ernest Maltravers. And agreeably to this disposition, he now resolved an idea that enchanted his mobile and fantastic philosophy. He himself would educate this charming girl—he would write fair and heavenly characters upon this blank page—he would act the Saint Preux to this Julie of Nature. Alas, he did not think of the result which the parallel should have suggested! At that age, Ernest Maltravers never damped the ardor of an experiment by the anticipation of consequences.

"So," he said, after a short reverie, "so you would like to live with me? But, Alice, we must not fall in love with each other."

"I don't understand, sir."

"Never mind," said Maltravers, a little disconcerted.

"I always wished to go into service."

"Ha!"

"And you would be a kind master."

Maltravers was half disenchanted.

"No very flattering preference," thought he: "so much the safer for us. Well, Alice, it shall be as you wish. Are you comfortable where you are, in your new lodging?"

"No."

"Why, they do not insult you?"

"No; but they make a noise, and I like to be quiet to think of you."

The young philosopher was reconcilied again to his scheme.

"Well, Alice—go back—I will take a cottage to-morrow, and you shall be my servant, and I will teach you to read and write, and say your prayers, and know that you have a Father above who loves you better than he below. Meet me again at the same hour to-morrow. Why do you cry, Alice? why do you cry?"

"Because—because," sobbed the girl, "I am so happy, and I shall live with you and see you."

"Go, child—go, child," said Maltravers hastily; and he walked away with a quicker pulse than became his new character of master and preceptor.

He looked back, and saw the girl gazing at him; he waved his hand, and she moved on and followed him slowly back to the town.

Maltravers, though not an elder son, was the heir of affluent fortunes; he enjoyed a munificent allowance that sufficed for the whims of a youth who had learned in Germany none of the extravagant notions common to young Englishmen of similar birth and prospects. He was a spoiled child, with no law but his own fancy,—his return home was not expected,—there was nothing to prevent the indulgence of his new caprice. The next day he hired a cottage in the neighborhood, which was one of those pretty thatched edifices, with verandahs and monthly roses, a conservatory and a lawn, which justify the English proverb about a cottage and love. It had been built by a mercantile bachelor for some fair Rosamond, and did credit to his taste. An old woman, let with the house, was to cook and do the work. Alice was but a nominal servant. Neither the old woman nor the landlord comprehended the Platonic intentions of the young stranger. But he paid his rent in advance, and they were not particular. He, however, thought it prudent to conceal his name. It was one sure to be known in a town not very distant from the residence of his father, a wealthy and long-descended country gentleman. He adopted, therefore, the common name of Butler; which, indeed, belonged to one of his maternal connections, and by that name alone was he known both in the neighborhood and to Alice. From her he would not have sought concealment,—but somehow or other no occasion ever presented ittelf to induce him to talk much to her of his parentage or birth.

CHAPTER V.

"Thought would destroy their Paradise."—GRAY.

MALTRAVERS found Alice as docile a pupil as any reasonable preceptor might have desired. But still, reading and writing—they are very uninteresting elements! Had the groundwork been laid, it might have been delightful to raise the fairy palace of knowledge; but the digging the foundations and constructing the cellars is weary labor. Perhaps he felt it so,—for in a few days Alice was handed over to the very oldest and ugliest writing-master that the neighboring town could afford. The poor girl at first wept much at the exchange; but the grave remonstrances and solemn exhortations of Maltravers reconciled her at last, and she promised to work hard and pay every attention to her lessons. I am not sure, however, that it was the tedium of the work that deterred the idealist—perhaps he felt its danger—and at the bottom of his sparkling dreams and brilliant follies lay a sound, generous, and noble heart.

He was fond of pleasure, and had been already the darling of the sentimental German ladies. But he was too young, and too vivid, and too romantic to be what is called a sensualist. He could not look upon a fair face, and a guileless smile, and all the ineffable symmetry of a woman's shape, with the eye of a man buying cattle for base uses. He very easily fell in love, or fancied he did, it is true,—but then he could not separate desire from fancy, or calculate the game of passion without bringing the heart or the imagination into the matter. And though Alice was very pretty and very engaging, he was not yet in love with her, and he had no intention of becoming so.

He felt the evening somewhat long, when for the first time Alice discontinued her usual lesson: but Maltravers had abundant resources in himself. He placed Shakspeare and Schiller on his table, and lighted his German meerschaum—he read till he became inspired, and then he wrote—and when he had composed a

few stanzas he was not contented till he had set them to music, and tried their melody with his voice. For he had all the passion of a German for song and music—that wild Maltravers !—and his voice was sweet, his taste consummate, his science profound. As the sun puts out a star, so the full blaze of his imagination, fairly kindled, extinguished for the time his fairy fancy for his beautiful pupil.

It was late that night when Maltravers went to bed—and as he passed through the narrow corridor that led to his chamber, he heard a light step flying before him, and caught the glimpse of a female figure escaping through a distant door. "The silly child !" thought he, at once divining the cause; "she has been listening to my singing. I shall scold her." But he forgot that resolution.

The next day, and the next, and many days passed, and Maltravers saw but little of the pupil for whose sake he had shut himself up in a country cottage, in the depth of winter. Still he did not repent his purpose, nor was he in the least tired of his seclusion—he would not inspect Alice's progress, for he was certain he should be dissatisfied with its slowness—and people, however handsome, cannot learn to read and write in a day. But he amused himself, notwithstanding. He was glad of an opportunity to be alone with his own thoughts, for he was at one of those periodical epochs of life when we like to pause and breathe awhile, in brief respite, from that methodical race in which we run to the grave. He wished to re-collect the stores of his past experience, and repose on his own mind, before he started afresh upon the active world.

The weather was cold and inclement; but Ernest Maltravers was a hardy lover of nature, and neither snow nor frost could detain him from his daily rambles. So about noon, he regularly threw aside books and papers, took his hat and staff, and whistling or humming his favorite airs through the dreary streets, or along the bleak waters, or amidst the leafless woods, just as the humor seized him; for he was not an Edwin or Harold, who reserved speculation only for lonely brooks and pastoral hills. Maltravers delighted to contemplate nature in men as well as in sheep or trees. The humblest alley in a crowded town had something poetical for him; he was ever ready to mix in a crowd, if it were only gathered round a barrel-organ or a [illegible] to all that was said, and no[illegible] done. And this I take to be th[illegible] temperament essential to every ar[illegible] pires to be something more than [illegible] painter. But, above all things, he was interested in any display of human passi[illegible] or affections; he loved to see the true colors of the heart, where they are most transparent —in the uneducated and poor—for he was something of an optimist, and had a hearty faith in the loveliness of our nature.

Perhaps, indeed he owed much of the insight into and mastery over character that he was afterwards considered to display, to his disbelief that there is any wickedness so dark as not to be susceptible or the light in some place or another. But Maltravers had his fits of unsociability, and then nothing but the most solitary scenes delighted him Winter or summer, barren waste or prodigal verdure, all had beauty in his eyes; for their beauty lay in his own soul, through which he beheld them. From these walks he would return home at dusk take his simple meal, rhyme or read away the long evenings with such alternation as music or the dreamy thoughts of a young man with gay life before him could afford. Happy Maltravers !—youth and genius have luxuries all the Rothschilds cannot purchase ! And yet, Maltravers, you are ambitious !—life moves too slowly for you !—you would push on the wheels of the clock !—Fool—brilliant fool !—you are eighteen and a poet !—What more can you desire ?—Bid Time stop for ever !

One morning Ernest rose earlier than his wont, and sauntered carelessly through the conservatory which adjoined his sitting-room; observing the plants with placid curiosity (for besides being a little of a botanist, he had odd visionary notions about the life of plants, and he saw in them a hundred mysteries which the herbalists do not teach us), when he heard a low and very musical voice singing at a little distance. He listened and recognized with surprise words of his own, which he had lately set to music, and was sufficiently pleased with to sing nightly.

When the song ended, Maltravers stole softly through the conservatory, and as he opened the door which led into the garden, he saw at the open window of a little room which

was apportioned to Alice, and jutted out from the building in the fanciful irregularity common to ornamental cottages, the form of his discarded pupil. She did not observe him; and it was not till he twice called her by name that she started from her thoughtful and melancholy posture.

"Alice," said he gently, "put on your bonnet, and walk with me in the garden; you look pale, child; the fresh air will do you good."

Alice colored and smiled, and in a few moments was by his side. Maltravers, meanwhile, had gone in and lighted his meerschaum, for it was his great inspirer whenever his thoughts were perplexed, or he felt his usual fluency likely to fail him, and such was the case now. With this faithful ally he awaited Alice in the little walk that circled the lawn, amidst the shrubs and evergreens.

"Alice," said he, after a pause, but he stopped short.

Alice looked up at him with grave respect.

"Tush!" said Maltravers; "perhaps the smoke is unpleasant to you. It is a bad habit of mine."

"No, sir," answered Alice; and she seemed disappointed. Maltravers paused and picked up a snowdrop.

"It is pretty," he said; "do you love flowers?"

"Oh, dearly," answered Alice, with some enthusiasm; "I never saw many till I came here."

"Now then, I can go on," thought Maltravers; why, I cannot say, for I do not see the *sequitur;* but on he went *in medias res.* "Alice, you sing charmingiy."

"Ah! sir, you—you—" she stopped abruptly, and trembled visibly.

"Yes, I overheard you, Alice."

"And you are angry?"

"I?—Heaven forbid! It is a *talent*, but you don't know what that is; I mean it is an excellent thing to have an ear, and a voice, and a heart for music; and you have all three."

He paused, for he felt his hand touched; Alice suddenly clasped and kissed it. Maltravers thrilled through his whole frame; but there was something in the girl's look that showed she was wholly unaware that she had committed an unmaidenly or forward action.

"I was so afraid you would be angry," she said, wiping her eyes as she dropped his hand; "and now I suppose you know all."

"All!"

"Yes; how I listened to you every evening, and lay awake the whole night with the music ringing in my ears, till I tried to go over it myself; and so at last I ventured to sing aloud. I like that much better than learning to read."

All this was delightful to Maltravers: the girl had touched upon one of his weak points: however, he remained silent. Alice continued.

"And now, sir, I hope you will let me come and sit outside the door every evening and hear you; I will make no noise—I will be so quiet."

"What, in that cold corridor, these bitter nights?"

"I am used to cold, sir. Father would not let me have a fire when he was not at home."

"No, Alice, but you shall come into the room while I play, and I will give you a lesson or two. I am glad you have so good an ear; it may be a means of your earning your own honest livelihood when you leave me."

"When I——but I never intend to leave you, sir!" said Alice, beginning fearfully and ending calmly.

Maltravers had recourse to the meerschaum.

Luckily, perhaps, at this time, they were joined by Mr. Simcox, the old writing-master. Alice went in to prepare her books; but Maltravers laid his hand upon the preceptor's shoulder.

"You have a quick pupil, I hope sir," said he.

"O very, very, Mr. Butler. She comes on famously. She practises a great deal when I am away, and I do my best."

"And," asked Maltravers, in a grave tone, "have you succeeded in instilling into the poor child's mind some of those more sacred notions of which I spoke to you in our first meeting?"

"Why, sir, she was indeed quite a heathen—quite a Mahometan, I may say: but she is a little better now."

"What have you taught her?"

"That God made her."

"That is a great step."

"And that he loves good girls, and will watch over them."

"Bravo! You beat Plato."

"No, sir, I never beat any one, except little Jack Turner; but he is a dunce."

"Bah! What else do you teach her?"

"That the devil runs away with bad girls, and——"

"Stop there, Mr. Simcox. Never mind the devil yet awhile. Let her first learn to do good, that God may love her; the rest will follow. I would rather make people religious through their best feelings than their worst,—through their gratitude and affections, rather than their fears and calculations of risk and punishment."

"Mr. Simcox stared.

"Does she say her prayers?"

"I have taught her a short one."

"Did she learn it readily?"

"Lord love her, yes! When I told her she ought to pray to God to bless her benefactor, she would not rest till I had repeated a prayer out of our Sunday-school book, and she got it by heart at once."

"Enough, Mr. Simcox. I will not detain you longer."

Forgetful of his untasted breakfast, Maltravers continued his meerschaum and his reflections; he did not cease, till he had convinced himself that he was but doing his duty to Alice, by teaching her to cultivate the charming talent she evidently possessed, and through which she might secure her own independence. He fancied that he should thus relieve himself of a charge and responsibility, which often perplexed him. Alice would leave him, enabled to walk the world in an honest professional path. It was an excellent idea. "But there is danger," whispered Conscience. "Ay," answered Philosophy and Pride, those wise dupes that are always so solemn, and always so taken in; "but what is virtue without trial?"

And now every evening, when the windows were closed, and the hearth burnt clear, while the winds stormed, and the rain beat without, a lithe and lovely shape hovered about the student's chamber; and his wild songs were sung by a voice, which Nature had made even sweeter than his own.

"Alice's talent for music was indeed surprising; enthusiastic and quick, as he himself was in all he undertook, Maltravers was amazed at her rapid progress. He soon taught her to play by ear; and Maltravers could not but notice that her hand, always delicate in shape, had lost the rude color and roughness of labor. He thought of that pretty hand more often than he ought to have done, and guided it over the keys, when it could have found its way very well without him.

On coming to the cottage, he had directed the old servant to provide suitable and proper clothes for Alice; but now that she was admitted, "to sit with the gentleman," the crone had the sense, without waiting for new orders, to buy the "pretty young woman" garments, still indeed simple, but of better materials, and less rustic fashion; and Alice's redundant tresses were now carefully arranged into orderly and glossy curls, and even the texture was no longer the same; and happiness and health bloomed on her downy cheeks, and smiled from the dewy lips, which never quite closed over the fresh white teeth, except when she was sad;—but that seemed never, now she was not banished from Maltravers.

To say nothing of the unusual grace and delicacy of Alice's form and features, there is nearly always something of Nature's own gentility in very young women (except, indeed, when they get together and fall a-giggling); it shames us men to see how much sooner they are polished into conventional shape, than our rough, masculine angles. A vulgar boy requires, Heaven knows what assiduity, to move three steps—I do not say like a gentleman, but like a body that has a soul in it; but give the least advantage of society or tuition to a peasant girl, and a hundred to one but she will glide into refinement before the boy can make a bow without upsetting the table. There is sentiment in all women, and sentiment gives delicacy to thought, and tact to manner. But sentiment with men is generally acquired, an offspring of the intellectual quality, not, as with the other sex, of the moral.

In the course of his musical and vocal lessons, Maltravers gently took the occasion to correct poor Alice's frequent offences against grammar and accent; and her memory was prodigiously quick and retentive. The very tones of her voice seemed altered in the ear of Maltravers; and, somehow or other, the time came when he was no longer sensible of the difference in their rank.

The old woman-servant, when she had seen how it would be from the first, and taken a pride

in her own prophecy, as she ordered Alice's new dressess, was a much better philosopher than Maltravers; though he was already up to his ears in the moon-lit abyss of Plato; and had filled a dozen common-place books with criticisms on Kant.

CHAPTER VI.

"Young man, I fear thy blood is rosy red,
Thy heart is soft."
—D'AGUILAR'S *Fiesco*, Act. iii, Sc. 1.

As education does not consist in reading and writing only, so Alice, while still very backward in those elementary arts, forestalled some of their maturest results in her intercourse with Maltravers. Before the inoculation took effect, she caught knowledge in the natural way. For the refinement of a graceful mind and a happy manner is very contagious. And Maltravers was encouraged by her quickness in music to attempt such instruction in other studies as conversation could afford. It is a better school than parents and masters think for: there was a time when all information was given orally; and probably the Athenians learned more from hearing Aristotle, than we do from reading him. It was a delicious revival of Academe—in the walks, or beneath the rustic porticoes of that little cottage,—the romantic philosopher and the beautiful disciple! And his talk was much like that of a sage of the early world, with some wistful and earnest savage for a listener:—of the stars and their courses—of beasts, and birds, and fishes, and plants and flowers—the wide Family of Nature—of the beneficence and power of God—of the mystic and spiritual history of Man.

Charmed by her attention and docility, Maltravers at length diverged from lore into poetry; he would repeat to her the simplest and most natural passages he could remember in his favorite poets; he would himself compose verses elaborately adapted to her understanding; she liked the last the best, and learned them the easiest. Never had young poet a more gracious inspiration, and never did this inharmonious world more complacently resolve itself into soft dreams, as if to humor the novitiate of the victims it must speedily take into its joyless priesthood. And Alice had now quietly and insensibly carved out her own avocations—the tenor of her service. The plants in the conservatory had passed under her care, and no one else was privileged to touch Maltravers' books, or arrange the sacred litter of a student's apartment. When he came down in the morning, or returned from his walks, every thing was in order, yet by a kind of magic, just as he wished it; the flowers he loved best, bloomed, fresh gathered, on his table; the very position of the large chair, just in that corner by the fire-place, whence on entering the room, its hospitable arms opened with the most cordial air of welcome, bespoke the presiding genius of a woman; and then, precisely as the clock struck eight, Alice entered, so pretty and smiling, and happy looking, that it was no wonder the single hour at first allotted to her extended into three.

Was Alice in love with Maltravers?—She certainly did not exhibit the symptoms in the ordinary way—she did not grow more reserved, and agitated, and timid—there was no worm in the bud of her damask cheek; nay, though from the first she had been tolerably bold, she was more free and confidential, more at her ease every day; in fact, she never for a moment suspected that she ought to be otherwise; she had not the conventional and sensitive delicacy of girls, who, whatever their rank of life, have been taught that there is a mystery and a peril in love; she had a vague idea about girls going wrong, but she did not know that love had anything to do with it; on the contrary, according to her father, it had connection with money, not love; all that she felt was so natural, and so very sinless. Could she help being so delighted to listen to him, and so grieved to depart? What thus she felt she expressed, no less simply and no less guilelessly: and the candor sometimes completely blinded and misled him. No, she could not be in love, or she could not so frankly own that she loved him—it was a sisterly and grateful sentiment.

"The dear girl—I am rejoiced to think so," said Maltravers to himself! "I knew there would be no danger."

Was he not in love himself?—the reader must decide.

"Alice," said Maltravers, one evening, after

a long pause of thought and abstraction on his side while she was unconsciously practising her last lesson on the piano—"Alice,—no, don't turn round—sit where you are, but listen to me. We cannot live always in this way."

Alice was instantly disobedient—she did turn round, and those great blue eyes were fixed on his own with such anxiety and alarm, that he had no resource but to get up and look round for the meerschaum. But Alice, who divined by an instinct his lightest wish, brought it to him, while he was yet hunting, amidst the further corners of the room, in places where it was certain not to be. There it was, already filled with the fragrant Salonica, glittering with the gilt pastile, which, not too healthfully, adulterates the seductive weed, with odors that pacify the repugnant censure of the fastidious —for Maltravers was an epicurean even in his worst habits;—there it was, I say, in that pretty hand which he had to touch as he took it; and while he lit the weed, he had again to blush and shrink beneath those great blue eyes.

"Thank you, Alice," he said: "thank you. Do sit down—there—out of the draught. I am going to open the window, the night is so lovely."

He opened the casement, overgrown with creepers, and the moonlight lay fair and breathless upon the smooth lawn. The calm and holiness of the night soothed and elevated his thoughts, he had cut himself off from the eyes of Alice, and he proceeded with a firm, though gentle volce:—

"My dear Alice, we cannot always live together in this way; you are now wise enough to understand me, so listen patiently. A young woman never wants a fortune so long as she has a good character; she is always poor and despised without one. Now, a good character in this world is lost as much by imprudence as guilt; and if you were to live with me much longer, it would be imprudent, and your character would suffer so much that you would not be able to make your own way in the world: far, then, from doing you a service, I should have done you a deadly injury, which I could not atone for: besides, Heaven knows what may happen worse than imprudence; for, I am very sorry to say," added Maltravers, with great gravity, "that you are much too pretty and engaging to—to—in short, it won't do. I must go home; my friends will have a right to complain of me, if I remain thus lost to them many weeks longer. And you, my dear Alice, are now sufficiently advanced to receive better instruction than I or Mr. Simcox can give you. I therefore propose to place you in some respectable family, where you will have more comfort, and a higher station than you have here. You can finish your education, and instead of being taught, you will be thus enabled to become a teacher to others. With your beauty, Alice," (and Maltravers sighed), "and natural talents, and amiable temper, you have only to act well and prudently, to secure at last a worthy husband and a happy home. Have you heard me, Alice? Such is the plan I have formed for you."

The young man thought as he spoke, with honest kindness and upright honor; it was a bitterer sacrifice than perhaps the reader thinks for. But Maltravers, if he had an impassioned, had not a selfish, heart; and he felt, to use his own expression, more emphatic than eloquent, that "it would not do," to live any longer alone with this beautiful girl, like the two children, whom the good fairy kept safe from sin and the world in the Pavilion of Roses.

But Alice comprehended neither the danger to herself, nor the temptations that Maltravers, if he could not resist, desired to shun. She rose, pale and trembling—approached Maltravers, and laid her hand gently on his arm.

"I will go away, when and where you wish —the sooner the better—to-morrow—yes, to-morrow; you are ashamed of poor Alice; and it has been very silly in me to be so happy." (She struggled with her emotion for a moment, and went on). "You know Heaven can hear me, even when I am away from you, and when I know more I can pray better; and Heaven will bless you, sir, and make you happy, for I never can pray for anything else."

With these words she turned away, and walked proudly towards the door. But when she reached the threshold, she stopped and looked around, as if to take a last farewell. All the associations and memories of that beloved spot rushed upon her—she gasped for breath, —tottered,—and fell to the ground insensible.

Maltravers was already by her side; he lifted her light weight in his arms; he uttered wild and impassioned exclamations—"Alice, beloved Alice—forgive me; we will never part!"

He chafed her hands in his own, while her head lay on his bosom, and he kissed again and again those beautiful eye lids, till they opened slowly upon him, and the tender arms tightened round him involuntarily,

"Alice," he whispered—"Alice, dear Alice, I love thee." Alas, it was true: he loved—and forgot all but that love. He was eighteen.

CHAPTER VII.

"How like a younker or a prodigal,
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay!"
—*Merchant of Venice.*

We are apt to connect the voice of Conscience with the stillness of mid-night. But I think we wrong that innocent hour. It is that terrible "NEXT MORNING," when reason is wide awake, upon which remorse fastens its fangs. Has a man gambled away his all, or shot his friend in a duel—has he committed a crime, or incurred a laugh—it is the *next morning*, when the irretrievable Past rises before him like a spectre; then doth the church-yard of memory yield up its griezly dead—then is the witching hour when the foul fiend within us can least tempt perhaps, but most torment. At night we have one thing to hope for, one refuge to fly to—oblivion and sleep! But at morning, sleep is over, and we are called upon coldly to review, and re-act, and live again the waking bitterness of self-reproach. Maltravers rose a penitent and unhappy man—remorse was new to him, and he felt as if he had committed a treacherous and fraudulent as well as guilty deed.

This poor girl, she was so innocent, so confiding, so unprotected, even by her own sense of right. He went down stairs listless and dispirited. He longed yet dreaded to encounter Alice. He heard her step in the conservatory—paused, irresolute, and at length joined her. For the first time she blushed and trembled, and her eyes shunned his. But when he kissed her hand in silence, she whispered, "And am I now to leave you?" And Maltravers answered fervently, "Never!" and then her face grew so radiant with joy, that Maltravers was comforted despite himself. Alice knew no remorse, though she felt agitated and ashamed; as she had not comprehended the danger, neither was she aware of the fall. In fact, she never thought of herself. Her whole soul was with him; she gave him back in love the spirit she had caught from him in knowledge.

And they strolled together through the garden all that day, and Maltravers grew reconciled to himself. He had done wrong, it is true; but then perhaps Alice had already suffered as much as she could in the world's opinion, by living with him alone, though innocent, so long. And now she had an everlasting claim to his protection—she should never know shame or want. And the love that had led to the wrong, should, by fidelity and devotion, take from it the character of sin.

Natural and commonplace sophistries! *L'homme se pique!* as old Montaigne said; Man is his own sharper! The conscience is the most elastic material in the world. To-day you cannot stretch it over a mole-hill, to-morrow it hides a mountain.

O how happy they were now—that young pair! How the days flew like dreams! Time went on, winter passed away, and the early spring, with its flowers and sunshine, was like a mirror to their own youth. Alice never accompanied Maltravers in his walks abroad, partly because she feared to meet her father, and partly because Maltravers himself was fastidiously averse to all publicity. But then they had all that little world of three acres—lawn and fountain, shrubbery and terrace, to themselves, and Alice never asked if there was any other world without. She was now quite a scholar, as Mr. Simcox himself averred. She could read aloud and fluently to Maltravers, and copied out his poetry in a small, fluctuating hand, and he had no longer to chase throughout his vocabulary for Low Saxon monosyllables to make the bridge of intercourse between their ideas. Eros and Psyche are ever united, and Love opens all the petals of the soul. On one subject alone, Maltravers was less eloquent than of yore. He had not succeeded as a moralist, and he thought it hypocritical to preach what he did not practice. But Alice was gentler and purer, and as far as she knew, sweet fool! better than ever—she had invented a new prayer for herself; and she prayed as regularly and as fervently as if she were doing nothing amiss. But the code

of heaven is gentler than that of earth, and does not declare that ignorance excuseth not the crime.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Some clouds sweep on as vultures for their prey.
* * * * *
No azure more shall robe the firmament,
Nor spangled stars be glorious."
—BYRON, *Heaven and Earth.*

IT WAS a lovely evening in April, the weather was unusually mild and serene for that time of the year, in the northern districts of our isle, and the bright drops of a recent shower sparkled upon the buds of the lilac and laburnum that clustered round the cottage of Maltravers. The little fountain that played in the centre of a circular basin, on whose clear surface the broad-leaved water-lily cast its fairy shadow, added to the fresh green of the lawn;—

"And softè as velvèt the yongè grass,"

on which the rare and early flowers were closing their heavy lids. That twilight shower had given a racy and vigorous sweetness to the air which stole over many a bank of violets, and slightly stirred the golden ringlets of Alice as she sat by the side of her entranced and silent lover.—They were seated on a rustic bench just without the cottage, and the open windows behind them admitted the view of that happy room—with its litter of books and musical instruments—eloquent of the POETRY of HOME.

Maltravers was silent, for his flexile and excitable fancy was conjuring up a thousand shapes along that transparent air, or upon those shadowy violet banks. He was not thinking, he was imagining. His genius reposed dreamily upon the calm, but exquisite sense of his happiness. Alice was not absolutely in his thoughts, but unconsciously she colored them all—if she had left his side, the whole charm would have been broken. But Alice, who was not a poet or a genius, *was* thinking, and thinking only of Maltravers. . . . His image was "the broken mirror" multiplied in a thousand faithful fragments, over every thing fair and soft in that lovely microcosm before her. But they were both alike in one thing—they were not with the Future, they were sensible of the Present—the sense of the actual life, the enjoyment of the breathing time, was strong within them. Such is the privilege of the extremes of our existence—Youth and Age. Middle life is never with to-day, its home is in to-morrow . . . . anxious and scheming, and desiring, and wishing this plot ripened and that hope fulfilled, while every wave of the forgotten Time brings it nearer and nearer to the end of all things. Half our life is consumed in longing to be nearer death.

"Alice," said Maltravers, waking at last from his reverie, and drawing that light, child-like form nearer to him, "you enjoy this hour as much as I do."

"Oh, much more!"

"More! and why so?"

"Because I am thinking of you, and perhaps you are thinking of yourself."

Maltravers smiled and stroked those beautiful ringlets, and kissed that smooth, innocent forehead, and Alice nestled herself in his breast. "How young you look by this light, Alice!" said he, tenderly looking down.

"Would you love me less if I were old?" asked Alice.

"I suppose I should never have loved you in the same way, if you had been old when I first saw you."

"Yet I am sure I should have felt the same for you if you had been—oh! ever so old!"

"What, with wrinkled cheeks, and palsied head, and a brown wig, and no teeth, like Mr. Simcox?"

"Oh, but you could never be like that! You would always look young—your heart would be always in your face. That dear smile—ah, you would look beautiful to the last!"

"But Simcox, though not very lovely now, has been, I dare say, handsomer than I am, Alice; and I shall be contented to look as well when I am as old."

"I should never know you were old, because I can see you just as I please. Sometimes, when you are thoughtful, your brows meet, and you look so stern that I tremble; but then I think of you when you last smiled, and look up again, and though you are frowning still, you seem to smile. I am sure you are different to other eyes than to mine. . . . and

time must kill *me* before, in my sight, it could alter *you*."

"Sweet Alice, you talk eloquently, for you talk love."

"My heart talks to you. Ah! I wish it could say all it felt. I wish it could make poetry like you, or that words were music—I would never speak to you in anything else. I was so delighted to learn music, because when I played I seemed to be talking to you. I am sure that whoever invented music did it because he loved dearly and wanted to say so. I said '*he*,' but I think it was a woman. Was it?"

"The Greeks I told you of, and whose life was music, thought it was a god."

"Ah, but you say the Greeks made Love a god. Were they wicked for it?"

"Our own God above is Love," said Ernest, seriously, "as our own poets have said and sung. But it is a love of another nature—divine, not human. Come, we will go within, the air grows cold for you."

They entered, his arm round her waist. The room smiled upon them its quiet welcome; and Alice, whose heart had not half vented its fulness, sat down to the instrument still to "talk love" in her own way.

But it was Saturday evening. Now every Saturday, Maltravers received from the neighboring town the provincial newspaper—it was his only medium of communication with the great world. But it was not for that communication that he always seized it with avidity, and fed on it with interest. The county in which his father resided bordered on the shire in which Ernest sojourned, and the paper included the news of that familiar district in its comprehensive columns. It therefore satisfied Ernest's conscience and soothed his filial anxieties to read, from time to time, that "Mr. Maltravers was entertaining a distinguished party of friends at his noble mansion of Lisle Court;" or that "Mr. Maltravers' fox-hounds had met on such a day at something copse;" or that "Mr. Maltravers, with his usual munificence, had subscribed twenty guineas to the new county jail." . . . And as now Maltravers saw the expected paper laid beside the hissing urn, he seized it eagerly, tore the envelope, and hastened to the well-known corner appropriated to the paternal district. The very first words that struck his eyes were these:—

"ALARMING ILLNESS OF MR. MALTRAVERS.

"We regret to state that this exemplary and distinguished gentleman was suddenly seized on Wednesday night with a severe spasmodic affection. Dr.—— was immediately sent for, who pronounced it to be gout in the stomach—the first medical assistance from London has been summoned.

"Postscript.—We have just learned, in answer to our inquiries at Lisle Court, that the respected owner is considerably worse; but slight hopes are entertained of his recovery. Captain Maltravers, his eldest son and heir, is at Lisle Court. An express has been despatched in search of Mr. Ernest Maltravers, who, involved by his high English spirit in some dispute with the authorities of a despotic government, had suddenly disappeared from Gottingen, where his extraordinary talents had highly distinguished him. He is supposed to be staying at Paris."

The paper dropped on the floor. Ernest threw himself back on the chair, and covered his face with his hands.

Alice was beside him in a moment. He looked up, and caught her wistful and terrified gaze. "Oh, Alice!" he cried, bitterly, and almost pushing her away, "if you could but guess my remorse!" Then springing on his feet, he hurried from the room.

Presently the whole house was in commotion. The gardner, who was always in the house about supper-time, flew to the town for post-horses. The old woman was in despair about the laundress, for her first and only thought was for "master's shirts." Ernest locked himself in his room. Alice! poor Alice!

In little more than twenty minutes, the chaise was at the door; and Ernest, pale as death, came into thé room where he had left Alice.

She was seated on the floor, and the fatal paper was on her lap. She had been endeavoring, in vain, to learn what had so sensibly affected Maltravers, for, as I said before, she was unacquainted with his real name, and therefore the ominous paragraph did not even arrest her eye.

He took the paper from her, for he wanted again and again to read it; some little word of hope or encouragement must have escaped

him. And then Alice flung herself on his breast. "Do not weep," said he; "Heaven knows I have sorrow enough of my own! My father is dying! So kind, so generous, so indulgent! O God, forgive me! Compose yourself, Alice. You will hear from me in a day or two.

He kissed her; but the kiss was cold and forced. He hurried away. She heard the wheels grate on the pebbles. She rushed to the window; but that beloved face was not visible. Maltravers had drawn the blinds, and thrown himself back to indulge his grief. A moment more, and even the vehicle that bore him away was gone, And before her were the flowers, and the star-lit lawn, and the playful fountain, and the bench where they had sat in such heartfelt and serene delight. He was gone; and often,—oh, how often, did Alice remember that his last words had been uttered in estranged tones—that his last embrace had been without love!

CHAPTER IX.

"Thy due from me
Is tears; and heavy sorrows of the blood,
Which nature, love, and filial tenderness,
Shall, O dear father, pay thee plenteously!"
—*Second Part of Henry IV.*, Act iv., Sc. 4.

It was late at night when the chaise that bore Maltravers stopped at the gates of a park lodge. It seemed an age before the peasant within was aroused from the deep sleep of labor-loving health. "My father," he cried, while the gate creaked on its hinges; "my father—is he better? Is he alive?"

"Oh, bless your heart, Master Ernest, the 'squire was a little better this evening."

"Thank heaven! On—on!"

The horses smoked and galloped along a road that wound through venerable and ancient groves. The moonlight slept soft upon the sward, and the cattle, disturbed from their sleep, roze lasily up, and gazed upon the unseasonable intruder.

It is a wild and weird scene, one of those noble English parks at midnight, with its rough forest-ground broken into dell and valley, its never-innovated and mossy grass, overrun with fern, and its immemorial trees, that have looked upon the birth, and look yet upon the graves, of a hundred generations. Such spots are the last proud and melancholy trace of Norman knighthood and old romance, left to the laughing landscapes of cultivated England. They always throw something of shadow and solemn gloom upon minds that feel their associations, like that which belongs to some ancient and holy edifice. They are the cathedral aisles of Nature, with their darkened vistas, and columed trunks, and arches of mighty foliage. But in ordinary times the gloom is pleasing, and more delightful than all the cheerful lawns and sunny slopes of the modern taste. *Now* to Maltravers it was ominous and oppressive: the darkness of death seemed brooding in every shadow, and its warning voice moaning in every breeze.

The wheels stopped again. Lights flitted across the basement story; and one above, more dim than the rest, shone palely from the room in which the sick man slept. The bell rang shrilly out from amidst the dark ivy that clung around the porch. The heavy door swung back—Maltravers was on the threshold. His father lived—was better — was awake. The son was in the father's arms.

CHAPTER X.

"The guardian oak
Mourn'd o'er the roof it shelter'd: the thick air
Labour'd with doleful sounds."—ELLIOTT *of Sheffield.*

MANY days had passed, and Alice was still alone; but she had heard twice from Maltravers. The letters were short and hurried. One time his father was better, and there were hopes; another time, and it was not expected that he could survive the week. They were the first letters Alice had ever received from him. Those *first* letters are an event in a girl's life—in Alice's life they were a very melancholy one. Ernest did not ask her to write to him; in fact, he felt, at such an hour, a repugnance to disclose his real name, and receive the letters of clandestine love in the house in which a father lay in death. He might have given the feigned address he had previously assumed, at some distant post-town, where his person was not known. But, then, to obtain such letters he must quit his

father's side for hours. The thing was impossible. These difficulties Maltravers did not explain to Alice.

She thought it singular he did not wish to hear from her; but Alice was humble. What could she say worth troubling him with, and at such an hour? But how kind in him to write! how precious those letters! and yet they disappointed her, and cost her floods of tears: they were so short—so full of sorrow—there was so little love in them; and "dear," or even "*dearest* Alice," that, uttered by the voice, was so tender, looked cold upon the lifeless paper. If she but knew the exact spot where he was, it would be some comfort; but she only knew that he was away, and in grief; and though he was little more than thirty miles distant, she felt as if immeasurable space divided them. However, she consoled herself as she could; and strove to shorten the long miserable day by playing over all the airs he liked, and reading all the passages he had commended. She should be so improved when he returned; and how lovely the garden would look! for every day its trees and bosquets caught a new smile from the deepening spring. Oh, they would be so happy once more! Alice *now* learned the life that lies in the future; and her young heart had not, as yet, been taught that of that future there is any prophet but Hope!

Maltravers, on quitting the cottage, had forgotten that Alice was without money; and now that he found his stay would be indefinitely prolonged, he sent a remittance. Several bills were unpaid—some portion of the rent was due; and Alice, as she was desired, intrusted the old servant with a bank note, with which she was to discharge these petty debts. One evening, as she brought Alice the surplus, the good dame seemed greatly discomposed. She was pale and agitated; or, as she expressed it, "had a terrible fit of the shakes."

"What is the matter, Mrs. Jones? you have no news of him—of—of my—of your master?"

"Dear heart, miss—no," answered Mrs. Jones; "how should I? But I'm sure I don't wish to frighten you, there has been two sitch robberies in the neighborhood?"

"O, thank Heaven that's all!" exclaimed Alice.

"O, don't go for to thank Heaven for that, miss; it's a shocking thing for two lone females like us, and them ere windows all open to the ground! You sees, as I was taking the note to be changed at Mr. Harris's, the great grocer's shop, where all the poor folk was a buying agin to-morrow" (for it was Saturday night, the second Saturday after Ernest's departure; from that hegira Alice dated all her chronology), "and every body was a-talking about the robberies last night. La, miss, they bound old Betty—you know Betty—a most respectable woman, who has known sorrows, and drinks tea with me once a week. Well, miss, they (only think!) bound Betty to the bedpost, with nothing on her but her shift—poor old soul! And as Mr. Harris gave me the change, (please to see, miss, it's all right), and I asked for half gould, miss, it's more convenient, sitch ill-looking fellow was by me, a buying o' baccy, and he did so stare at the money, that I vows I thought he'd have rin away with it from the counter; so I grabbed it up and went away. But, would you believe, miss, just as I got into the lane, afore you turns through the gate, I chanced to look back, and there, sure enough, was that ugly fellow close behind, a running like mad. O, I set up such a skreetch; and young Dobbins was taking his cow out of the field, and he perked up over the hedge when he heard me; and the cow, too with her horns, Lord bless her! So the fellow stopped, and I bustled through the gate, and got home. But la, miss, if we are all robbed and murdered?"

Alice had not heard much of this harangue; but what she did hear, very slightly affected her strong, peasant-born nerves; not half so much, indeed, as the noise Mrs. Jones made in double-locking all the doors, and barring, as well as a peg and a rusty inch of chain would allow, all the windows,—which operation occupied at least an hour and a half.

All at last was still. Mrs. Jones had gone to bed—in the arms of sleep she had forgotten her terrors—and Alice had crept up stairs, and undressed, and said her prayers, and wept a little; and, with the tears yet moist upon her dark eyelashes, had glided into dreams of Ernest. Midnight was past—the stroke of One sounded unheard from the clock at the foot of their stairs. The moon was gone—a slow, drizzling rain was falling upon the flowers, and cloud and darkness gathered fast and thick around the sky.

About this time, a low, regular, grating sound commenced at the thin shutters of the sitting-room below, proceeded by a very faint noise, like the tinkling of small fragments of glass on the gravel without. At length it ceased, and the cautious and partial gleam of a lanthorn fell along the floor, another moment, and two men stood in the room.

"Hush, Jack!" whispered one; "hang out the glim, and let's look about us."

The dark lanthorn, now fairly unmuffled, presented to the gaze of the robbers nothing that could gratify their cupidity. Books and music, chairs, tables, carpet, and fire-irons, though valuable enough in a house-agent's inventory, are worthless to the eyes of a house-breaker. They muttered a mutual curse.

"Jack," said the former speaker, "we must make a dash at the spoons and forks, and then hey for the money. The old girl has thirty shiners, besides flimsies."

The accomplice nodded consent; the lanthorn was again partially shaded, and with noiseless and stealthy steps the men quitted the apartment. Several minutes elapsed, when Alice was awakened from her slumber by a loud scream: she started, all was again silent: she must have dreamt it: her little heart beat violently at first, but gradually regained its tenor. She rose, however, and the kindness of her nature being more susceptible than her fear—she imagined Mrs. Jones might be ill—she would go to her. With this idea she began partially dressing herself, when she distinctly heard heavy footsteps and a strange voice in the room beyond. She was now thoroughly alarmed—her first impulse was to escape from the house—her next to bolt the door, and call aloud for assistance. But who would hear her cries? Between the two purposes she halted irresolute . . . . and remained, pale and trembling, seated at the foot of the bed, when a broad light streamed through the chinks of the door—an instant more, and a rude hand seized her.

"Come, mem; don't be fritted, we won't harm you; but where's the gold-dust—where's the money?—the old girl says you've got it. Fork it over."

"O mercy, mercy! John Walters, is that you?"

"Damnation!" muttered the man staggering back, "so you knows me, then; but you shan't peach; you shan't scrag me, b—t you."

While he spoke he again seized Alice, held her forcibly down with one hand, while with the other he deliberately drew from a side pouch a long case-knife. In that moment of deadly peril, the second ruffian, who had been hitherto delayed in securing the servant, rushed forward. He had heard the exclamation of Alice, he heard the threat of his comrade; he darted to the bedside, cast a hurried gaze upon Alice, and hurled the intended murderer to the other side of the room.

"What, man, art mad?" he growled between his teeth. "Don't you know her? It is Alice;—it is my daughter."

Alice had sprung up when released from the murderer's knife, and now, with eyes strained and starting with horror, gazed upon the dark and evil face of her deliverer.

"O God, it is—it is my father!" she muttered, and fell senseless.

"Daughter or no daughter," said John Walters, "I shall not put my scrag in her power; recollect how she fritted us before, when she run away."

Darvil stood thoughtful and perplexed—and his associate approached doggedly with a look of such settled ferocity as it was impossible for even Darvil to contemplate without a shudder.

"You say right," muttered the father, after a pause; but fixing his strong grip on his comrade's shoulder—"the girl must not be left here—the cart has a covering. We are leaving the country; I have a right to my daughter—she shall go with us. There, man, grab the money—it's on the table; . . . . you've got the spoons. Now then—" as Darvil spoke he seized his daughter in his arms; threw over her a shawl and a cloak that lay at hand, and was already on the threshold.

"I don't half like it," said Walters, grumblingly—"it been't safe."

"At least it is as safe as murder!" answered, turning round, with a ghastly grin. "Make haste."

When Alice recovered her senses, the dawn was breaking slowly along desolate and sullen hills. She was lying upon rough straw—the cart was jolting over the ruts of a precipitous, lonely road,—and by her side scowled the face of that dreadful father.

CHAPTER XI.

"Yet he beholds her with the eyes of mind—
He sees the form which he no more shall meet—
She like a passionate thought is come and gone,
While at his feet the bright rill bubbles on."
—ELLIOTT *of Sheffield.*

IT was a little more than three weeks after that night, when the chaise of Maltravers stopped at the cottage door—the windows were shut up; no one answered the repeated summons of the post-boy. Maltravers himself, alarmed and amazed, descended from the vehicle: he was in deep mourning. He went impatiently to the back entrance; that also was locked; round to the French windows of the drawing-room, always hitherto half-opened, even in the frosty days of winter,—they were now closed like the rest. He shouted in terror, "Alice! Alice!"—no sweet voice answered in breathless joy, no fairy step bounded forward in welcome. At this moment, however, appeared the form of the gardener, coming across the lawn. The tale was soon told; the house had been robbed—the old woman at morning found gagged and fastened to her bed-post—Alice flown. A magistrate had been applled to,—suspicion fell upon the fugitive. None knew anything of her origin or name, not even the old woman. Maltravers had naturally and sedulously ordained Alice to preserve that secret, and she was too much in fear of being detected and claimed by her father, not to obey the injunction with scrupulous caution. But it was known, at least, that she had entered the house a poor peasant girl; and what more common than for ladies of a certain description to run away from their lover, and take some of his property by mistake?

And a poor girl like Alice—what else could be expected? The magistrate smiled, and the constables laughed. After all, it was a good joke at the young gentleman's expense! Perhaps, as they had no orders from Maltravers, and they did not know where to find him, and thought he would be little inclined to prosecute, the search was not very rigorous. But two houses had been robbed the night before. Their owners were more on the alert. Suspicion fell upon a man of infamous character, John Walters; he had disappeared from the place. He had been last seen with an idle, drunken fellow, who was said to have known better days, and who at one time had been a skilful and well-paid mechanic, till his habits of theft and drunkenness threw him out of employ; and he had been since accused of connection with a gang of coiners—tried—and escaped from want of sufficient evidence against him. That man was Luke Darvil. His cottage was searched; but he also had fled. The trace of cart-wheels by the gate of Maltravers gave a faint clue to pursuit; and after an active search of some days, persons answering to the description of the suspected burglars—with a young female in their company—were tracked to a small inn, notorious as a resort for smugglers, by the sea-coast. But there every vestige of their supposed whereabout disappeared.

And all this was told to the stunned Maltravers; the garrulity of the gardener precluded the necessity of his own inquiries, and the name of Darvil explained to him all that was dark to others. And Alice was suspected of the basest and the blackest guilt! Obscure, beloved, protected as she had been, she could not escape the calumny from which he had hoped everlastingly to shield her. But did *he* share that hateful thought? Maltravers was too generous and too enlightened.

"Dog!" said he, grinding his teeth, and clenching his hands, at the startled menial, "dare to utter a syllable of suspicion against her, and I will trample the breath out of your body!"

The old woman, who had vowed that for the varsal world she would not stay in the house after such a "night of shakes," had now learned the news of her master's return,—and came hobbling up to him. She arrived in time to hear his menace to her fellow-servant.

"Ah, that's right; give it to him, your honor, bless your good heart—that's what I says. Miss rob the house! says I—miss run away! O no—depend on it they have murdered her, and buried the body.

Maltravers gasped for breath, but without uttering another word he re-entered the chaise and drove to the house of the magistrate. He found that functionary a worthy and intelligent man of the world. To him he confided the secret of Alice's birth and his own. The magistrate concurred with him in believing that Alice had been discovered and removed

by her father. New search was made—gold was lavished. Maltravers himself headed the search in person. But all came to the same result as before, save that by the descriptions he heard of the person—the dress—the tears, of the young female who had accompanied the men supposed to be Darvil and Walters, he was satisfied that Alice yet lived; he hoped she might yet escape and return. In that hope he lingered for weeks—for months, in the neighborhood; but time passed, and no tidings..... He was forced at length to quit a neighborhood at once so saddened and endeared. But he secured a friend in the magistrate, who promised to communicate with him if Alice returned, or her father was discovered. He enriched Mrs. Jones for life, in gratitude for her vindication of his lost and early love: he promised the amplest rewards for the smallest clue. And with a crushed and desponding spirit, he obeyed at last the repeated and anxious summons of the guardian to whose care until his majority was attained, the young orphan was now intrusted.

CHAPTER XII.

"Sure there are poets that did never dream
Upon Parnassus."—DENHAM.

"Walk sober off, before a sprightlier age
Come tittering on, and shove you from the stage."
—POPE.

"Hence to repose your trust in me was wise."
—DRYDEN'S *Absalom and Achitophel.*

MR. FREDERICK CLEVELAND, a younger son of the Earl of Byrneham, and therefore entitled to the style and distinction of 'Honorable,' was the guardian of Ernest Maltravers. He was now about the age of forty-three; a man of letters and a man of fashion, if the last half-obsolete expression be permitted to us, as being at least more classical and definite than any other which modern euphuism has invented to convey the same meaning. Highly educated, and with natural abilities considerably above mediocrity, Mr. Cleveland early in life had glowed with the ambition of an author. .. . . He had written well and gracefully—but his success, though respectable, did not satisfy his aspirations. The fact is, that a new school of literature ruled the public despite the critics—a school very different from that in which Mr. Cleveland had formed his unimpassioned and polished periods. And as that old Earl, who in the time of Charles the First was the reigning wit of the court, in the time of Charles the Second was considered too dull even for a butt, so every age has its own literary stamp and coinage, and consigns the old circulation to its shelves and cabinets, as neglected curiosities. Cleveland could not become the fashion with the public as an author, though the coteries cried him up and the reviewers adored him—and the ladies of quality and the amateur dilettanti bought and bound his volumes of careful poetry and cadenced prose.

But Cleveland had high birth and a handsome competence—his manners were delightful, his conversation fluent—and his disposition was as amiable as his mind was cultered. He became, therefore, a man greatly sought after in society—both respected and beloved. If he had not genius, he had great good sense;—he did not vex his urbane temper and kindly heart with walking after a vain shadow, and disquieting himself in vain. Satisfied with an honorable and unenvied reputation, he gave up the dream of that higher fame which he clearly saw was denied to his aspirations—and maintained his good-humor with the world, though in his secret soul he thought it was very wrong in its literary caprices. Cleveland never married; he lived partly in town, but principally at Temple Grove, a villa not far from Richmond. Here, was an excellent library, beautiful grounds, and a circle of attached and admiring friends, which comprised all the more refined and intellectual members of what is termed by emphasis, *Good Society*—this accomplished and elegant person passed a life, perhaps, much happier than he would have known had his young vlsions been fulfilled, and it had become his stormy fate to lead the rebellious and fierce Democracy of Letters.

Cleveland was indeed, if not a man of high and original genius, at least, very superor to the generality of patrician authors. In retiring, himself, from frequent exercise, in the arena, he gave up his mind with renewed zest to the the thoughts and masterpieces of others. From a well-read man, he became a deeply-instructed one. Metaphysics, and some of

the material sciences, added new treasures to information more light and miscellaneous, and contributed to impart weight and dignity to a mind that might otherwise have become somewhat effeminate and frivolus. His social habits, his clear sense, and benevolence of judgment, made him also an exquisite judge of all those indefinable nothings or little things, that, formed into a total, become knowledge of the Great World. I say the Great World—for of the world without the circle of the great, Cleveland naturally knew but little. But of all that related to that subtle orbit in which gentlemen and ladies move in elevated and ethereal order, Cleveland was a profound philosopher. It was the mode with many of his admirers to style him the Horace Walpole of the day. But though in some of the more external and superficial points of character they were alike, Cleveland had considerably less cleverness and infinitely more heart.

The late Mr. Maltravers, a man not indeed of literary habits, but an admirer of those who were—an elegant, high-bred, hospitable *seigneur de province*—had been one of the earliest of Cleveland's friends—Cleveland had been his fag at Eton—and he found Hal Maltravers—(Handsome Hal!) had become the darling of the clubs, when he made his own *début* in society. They were inseparable for a season or two—and when Mr. Maltravers married, and enamoured or country pursuits, proud of his old hall, and sensibly enough conceiving that he was a greater man in his own broad lands than in the republican aristocracy of London, settled peaceably at Lisle Court, Cleveland corresponded with him regularly, and visited him twice a-year.—Mrs. Maltravers died in giving birth to Ernest, her second son. Her husband loved her tenderly, and was long inconsolable for her loss. He could not bear the sight of the child that had cost him so dear a sacrifice. Cleveland and his sister, Lady Julia Danvers, were residing with him at the time of this melancholy event; and with judicious and delicate kindness, Lady Julia proposed to place the unconscious offender amongst her own children for some months. The proposition was accepted, and it was two years before the infant Ernest was restored to the paternal mansion. During the greater part of that time, he had gone through all the events and revolutions of baby life, under the bachelor roof of Frederick Cleveland. The result of this was, that the latter loved the child like a father. Ernest's first intelligible word hailed Cleveland as "papa;" and when the urchin was at length deposited at Lisle Court, Cleveland talked all the nurses out of breath with admonitions, and cautions, and injunctions, and promises, and threats, which might have put many a careful mother to the blush. This circumstance formed a new tie between Cleveland and his friend. Cleveland's visits were now three times a-year, instead of twice. Nothing was done for Ernest without Cleveland's advice. He was not even breeched till Cleveland gave his grave consent. Cleveland chose his school, and took him to it, —and he spent a week of every vacation in Cleveland's house. The boy never got into a scrape, or won a prize, or wanted *a tip*, or coveted a book, but what Cleveland was the first to know of it. Fortunately, too, Ernest manifested by times tastes which the graceful author thought similar to his own. He early developed very remarkable talents, and a love for learning—though these were accompanied with a vigor of life and soul—an energy—a daring—which gave Cleveland some uneasiness, and which did not appear to him at all congenial with the moody shyness of an embryo genius, or the regular placidity of a precocious scholar. Meanwhile the relation between father and son was rather a singular one. Mr. Maltravers had overcome his first, not unnatural, repugnance to the innocent cause of his irremediable loss. He was now fond and proud of his boy—as he was of all things that belonged to him. He spoiled and petted him even more than Cleveland did. But he interfered very little with his education or pursuits. His eldest son, Cuthbert, did not engross all his heart, but occupied all his care. With Cuthbert he connected the heritage of his ancient name, and the succession of his ancestral estates. Cuthbert was not a genius, nor intended to be one; he was to be an accomplished gentleman, and a great proprietor. The father understood Cuthbert, and could see clearly both his character and career. He had no scruple in managing his education, and forming his growing mind. But Ernest puzzled him. Mr. Maltravers was even a little embarrassed in the boy's society; he never quite overcame that feeling of strangeness

towards him which be had experienced when he first received him back from Cleveland, and took Cleveland's directions about his health and so forth. It always seemed to him as if his friend shared his right to the child; and he thought it a sort of presumption to scold Ernest, though he very often swore at Cuthbert. As the younger son grew up, it certainly was evident that Cleveland did understand him better than his own father did; and so, as I have before said, on Cleveland the father was not displeased passively to shift the responsibility of the rearing.

Perhaps Mr. Maltravers might not have been so indifferent, had Ernest's prospects been those of a younger son in general. If a profession had been necessary for him, Mr. Maltravers would have been naturally anxious to see him duly fitted for it. But from a maternal relation, Ernest inherited an estate of about four thousand pounds a-year; and he was thus made independent of his father. This loosened another tie between them; and so by degrees Mr. Maltravers learned to consider Ernest less as his own son, to be advised or rebuked, praised or controlled, than as a very affectionate, promising, engaging boy, who, somehow or other, without any trouble on his part, was very likely to do great credit to his family, and indulge his eccentricities upon four thousand pounds a-year. The first time that Mr. Maltravers was seriously perplexed about him was when the boy, at the age of sixteen, having taught himself German, and intoxicated his wild fancies with "Werter," and "The Robbers," announced his desire, which sounded very like a demand, of going to Gottingen, instead of to Oxford. Never were Mr. Maltravers' notions of a proper and gentlemanlike finish to education more completely and rudely assaulted. He stammered out a negative, and hurried to his study to write a long letter to Cleveland, who, himself an Oxford prize-man, would, he was persuaded, see the matter in the same light. Cleveland answered the letter in person: listened in silence to all the father had to say, and then strolled through the park with the young man. The result of the latter conference was, that Cleveland declared in favor of Ernest.

"But, my dear Frederick," said the astonished father, "I thought the boy was to carry off all the prizes at Oxford?"

"I carried off some, Maltravers; but I don't see what good they did me."

"O Cleveland!"

"I am serious."

"But it is such a very odd fancy."

"Your son is a very odd young man."

"I fear he is so—I fear he is, poor fellow! But what will he learn at Gottingen?"

"Languages and Independence," said Cleveland.

"And the classics—the classics—you are such an excellent Grecian!"

"There are great Grecians in Germany," answered Cleveland; "and Ernest cannot well unlearn what he knows already. My dear Maltravers, the boy is not like most clever young men. He must either go through action, and adventure, and excitement, in his own way, or he will be an idle dreamer, or an impracticable enthusiast all his life. Let him alone.—So Cuthbert is gone into the Guards?"

"But he went first to Oxford."

"Humph! What a fine young man he is!"

"Not so tall as Ernest, but ——"

"A handsomer face," said Cleveland. "He is a son to be proud of in one way, as I hope Ernest will be in another. Will you show me your new hunter?"

* * * * *
* * * * *

It was to the house of this gentleman, so judiciously made his guardian, that the student of Gottingen now took his melancholy way.

CHAPTER XIII.

"But if a little exercise you choose,
Some zest for ease, 'tis not forbidden here;
Amid the groves you may indulge the Muse,
Or tend the blooms and deck the vernal year."
—*Castle of Indolence.*

THE house of Mr. Cleveland was an Italian villa adapted to an English climate. Through an Ionic arch you entered a domain of some eighty or a hundred acres in extent, but so well planted and so artfully disposed, that you could not have supposed the unseen boundaries enclosed no ampler a space. The road wound through the greenest sward, in which trees of venerable growth were relieved by a profusion of shrubs, and flowers gathered into

baskets interwined with creepers, or blooming from classic vases, placed with a tasteful care in such spots as required the *filling up*, and harmonized well with the object chosen. Not an old ivy-grown pollard, not a modest and bending willow, but was brought out, as it were, into a peculiar feature by the art of the owner. Without being overloaded, or too minutely elaborate (the common fault of the rich man's villa), the whole place seemed one diversified and cultivated garden; even the air almost took a different odor from different vegetation, with each winding of the road; and the colors of the flowers and foliage varied with every view.

At length, when, on a lawn sloping towards a glassy like overhung by limes and chestnuts, and backed by a hanging wood, the house itself came in sight, the whole prospect seemed suddenly to receive its finishing and crowning feature. The house was long and low. A deep peristyle that supported the roof extended the whole length, and being raised above the basement, had the appearance of a covered terrace; broad flights of steps, with massive balustrades, supporting vases of aloes and orange-trees, led to the lawn; and under the peristyle were ranged statues, Roman antiquities, and rare exotics. On this side the lake another terrace, very broad, and adorned at long intervals, with urns and sculpture, contrasted the shadowy and sloping bank beyond; and commanded, through unexpected openings in the trees, extensive views of the distant landscape, with the stately Thames winding through the midst.

The interior of the house corresponded with the taste without. All the principal rooms, even those appropriated to sleep, were on the same floor. A small but lofty and octagonal hall, conducted to a suite of four rooms. At one extremity was a moderately sized dining-room, with a ceiling copied from the rich and gay colors of Guido's "Hours;" and landscapes painted by Cleveland himself, with no despicable skill, were let into the walls. A single piece of sculpture, copied from the Piping Faun, and tinged with a fleshlike glow by purple and orange draperies behind it, relieved, without darkening the broad and arched window which formed its niche. This communicated with a small picture-room, not indeed rich with those immortal gems for which princes are candidates; for Cleveland's fortune was but that of a private gentleman, though, managed with a discreet if liberal economy, it sufficed for all his elegant desires. But the pictures had an interest beyond that of art, and their subjects were within the reach of a collector of ordinary opulence. They made a series of portraits—some originals, some copies (and the copies were often the best) of Cleveland's favorite authors. And it was characteristic of the man, that Pope's worn and thoughtful countenance looked down from the central place of honor. Appropriately enough this room led into the library, the largest room in the house, the only one indeed that was noticeable from its size, as well as its embellishments. It was nearly sixty feet in length. The bookcases were crowned with bronzed busts, while at intervals, statues, placed in open arches, backed with mirrors, gave the appearance of galleries, opening from the book-lined walls, and introduced an inconceivable air of classic lightness and repose into the apartment; with these arches the windows harmonized so well, opening on the peristyle, and bringing into delightful view the sculpture, the flowers, the terraces, and the lake without, that the actual prospects half seduced you into the belief that they were designs by some master-hand of the poetical gardens that yet crown the hills of Rome.

Even the coloring of the prospects on a sunny day favored the delusion, owing to the deep, rich hues of the simple draperies, and the stained glass of which the upper panes of the windows were composed. Cleveland was especially fond of sculpture; he was sensible, too, of the mighty impulse which that art has received in Europe within the last half century. He was even capable of asserting the doctrine, not yet sufficiently acknowledged in this country, that Flaxman surpassed Canova. He loved sculpture, too, not only for its own beauty, but for the beautifying and intellectual effect that it produces wherever it is admitted. It is a great mistake, he was wont to say, in collectors of statues, to arrange them *pêle-mêle* in one long monotonous gallery. The single relief, or statue, or bust, or simple urn, introduced appropriately in the smallest apartment we inhabit, charms us infinitely more than those gigantic museums, crowded

into rooms never entered but for show, and without a chill, uncomfortable shiver. Besides, this practice of galleries, which the herd consider orthodox, places sculpture out of the patronage of the public. There are not a dozen people who can afford galleries. But every moderately affluent gentleman can afford a statue or a bust. The influence, too, upon a man's mind and taste, created by the constant and habitual view of monuments of the only imperishable art which resorts to physical materials, is unspeakable. Looking upon the Greek marble, we become acquainted, almost insensibly, with the character of the Greek life and literature. That Aristides, that Genius of Death, that fragment of the unrivalled Psyche, are worth a thousand Scaligers!

"Do you ever look at the Latin translation when you read Æschylus?" said a schoolboy once to Cleveland.

"That is my Latin translation," said Cleveland, pointing to the Laocoon.

The library opened, at the extreme end, to a small cabinet for curiosities and medals, which, still in a straight line, conducted to a long belvidere, terminating in a little circular summerhouse, that by a sudden wind of the lake below, hung perpendicularly over its transparent tide, and, seen from the distance, appeared almost suspended on air, so light were its slender columns and arching dome. Another door from the library opened upon a corridor, which conducted to the principal sleeping chambers; the nearest door was that of Cleveland's private study, communicating with his bed-room and dressing-closet. The other rooms were appropriated to, and named after, his several friends.

Mr. Cleveland had been advised by a hasty line of the movements of his ward, and he received the young man with a smile of welcome, though his eyes were moist and his lips trembled—for the boy was like his father! —a new generation had commenced for Cleveland!

"Welcome, my dear Ernest," said he; "I am so glad to see you, that I will not scold you for your mysterious absence. This is your room, you see your name over the door; it is a larger one than you used to have, for you are a man now; and there is your German sanctum adjoining—for Schiller and the meerschaum!—a bad habit, that, the meerschaum! but not worse than the Schiller perhaps! You see you are in the peristyle immediately. The meerschaum is good for flowers, I fancy, so have no scruple. Why, my dear boy, how pale you are! Be cheered—be cheered. Well, I must go myself, or you will infect me."

Cleveland hurried away; he thought of his lost friend. Ernest sank upon the first chair, and buried his face in his hands. Cleveland's valet entered, and bustled about and unpacked the portmanteau, and arranged the evening dress. But Ernest did not look up nor speak; the first bell sounded; the second tolled unheard upon his ear. He was thoroughly overcome by his emotions. The first notes of Cleveland's kind voice had touched upon a soft chord, that months of anxiety and excitement had strained to anguish, but had never woke to tears. His nerves were shattered —those strong young nerves! He thought of his dead father when he first saw Cleveland; but when he glanced round the room prepared for him, and observed the care for his comfort, and the tender recollection of his most trifling peculiarities everywhere visible, Alice, the watchful, the humble, the loving, the lost Alice, rose before him. Surprised at his ward's delay, Cleveland entered the room; there sate Ernest still, his face buried in his hands. Cleveland drew them gently away, and Maltravers sobbed like an infant. It was an easy matter to bring tears to the eyes of that young man: a generous or a tender thought, an old song, the simplest air of music, sufficed for that touch of the mother's nature. But the vehement and awful passion which belongs to manhood when thoroughly unmanned—this was the first time in which the relief of that stormy bitterness was known to him!

CHAPTER XIV.

"Musing full sadly in his sullen mind."—*Spenser.*

"There forth issued from under the altar-smoke
A dreadful fiend."—*Ibid. on Superstition.*

NINE times out of ten it is over the Bridge of Sighs that we pass the narrow gulf from Youth to Manhood. That interval is usually occupied by an ill-placed or disappointed affection. We recover, and we find ourselves a

new being. The intellect has become hardened by the fire through which it has passed. The mind profits by the wrecks of every passion, and we may measure our road to wisdom by the sorrows we have undergone. But Maltravers was yet *on* the bridge, and, for a time, both mind and body were prostrate and enfeebled. Cleveland had the sagacity to discover that the affections had their share in the change that he grieved to witness, but he had also the delicacy not to force himself into the young man's confidence. But by little and little his kindness so completely penetrated the heart of his ward, that Ernest one evening told him his whole tale. As a man of the world, Cleveland perhaps rejoiced that it was no worse, for he had feared some existing entanglement, perhaps, with a married woman. But as a man who was better than the world in general, he sympathized with the unfortunate girl whom Ernest pictured to him in faithful and unflattered colors, and he long forebore consolations which he foresaw would be unavailing. He felt, indeed, that Ernest was not a man "to betray the noon of manhood to a myrtle-shade;"—that with so sanguine, buoyant, and hardy a temperament, he would at length recover from a depression which, if it could bequeath a warning, might as well not be wholly divested of remorse.

And he also knew that few become either great authors or great men (and he fancied Ernest was born to be one or the other), without the fierce emotions and passionate struggles, through which the Wilhelm Meister of Real Life must work out his apprenticeship, and attain the Master-Rank. But at last he had serious misgivings about the health of his ward. A constant and spectral gloom seemed bearing the young man to the grave. It was in vain that Cleveland, who secretly desired him to thirst for a public career, endeavored to arouse his ambition—the boy's spirit seemed quite broken—and the visit of a political character, the mention of a political work, drove him at once into his solitary chamber. At length his mental disease took a new turn. He became, of a sudden, most morbidly, and fanatically—I was about to say, religious: but that is not the word; let me call it pseudo religious. His strong sense and cultivated taste did not allow him to delight in the raving tracts of illiterate fanatics—and yet out of the benign and simple elements of the Scripture, he conjured up for himself a fanaticism quite as gloomy and intense. He lost sight of God the Father, and night and day dreamed only of God the Avenger. His vivid imagination was perverted to raise out of its own abyss phantoms of collossal terror. He shuddered aghast at his own creations, and earth and heaven alike seemed black with the everlasting wrath. These symptoms completely baffled and perplexed Cleveland. He knew not what remedy to administer—and to his unspeakable grief and surprise he found that Ernest, in the true spirit of his strange bigotry, began to regard Cleveland—the amiable, the benevolent Cleveland—as one no less out of the pale of grace than himself. His elegant pursuits, his cheerful studies, were considered by the young but stern enthusiast, as the miserable recreations of Mammon and the world. There seemed every probability that Ernest Maltravers would die in a madhouse, or at best, succeed to the delusions, without the cheerful intervals, of Cowper.

CHAPTER XV.

"Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,
Restless—unfixed in principles and place."
—DRYDEN.

"Whoever acquires a very great number of ideas interesting to the society in which he lives, will be regarded in that society as a man of abilities."
—HELVETIUS.

IT was just when Ernest Maltravers was so bad, that he could not be worse, that a young man visited Temple Grove. The name of this young man was Lumley Ferrers, his age about twenty-six, his fortune about eight hundred a-year—he followed no profession. Lumley Ferrers had not what is usually called genius; that is, he had no enthusiasm; and if the word talent be properly interpreted as meaning the talent of doing something better than others, Ferrers had not much to boast of on that score. He had no talent for writing, nor for music, nor painting, nor the ordinary round of accomplishments; neither at present had he displayed much of the hard and useful talent for action and business. But Ferrers had what is often better than either genius or

talent; he had a powerful and most acute mind. He had, moreover, great animation of manner, high physical spirits, a witty, odd racy vein of conversation, determined assurance, and profound confidence in his own resources. He was fond of schemes, stratagems and plots—they amused and excited him—his power of sarcasm, and of argument, too, was great, and he usually obtained an astonishing influence over those with whom he was brought in contact. His high spirits and a most happy frankness of bearing carried off and disguised his leading vices of character which were callousness to whatever was affectionate, and insensibility to whatever was moral. Though less learned than Maltravers, he was on the whole a very instructed man. He mastered the surface of many sciences, became satisfied of their general principles, and threw the study aside never to be forgotten (for his memory was like a vice), but never to be prosecuted any further. To this he added a general acquaintance with whatever is most generally acknowledged as standard in antient or modern literature. What is admired only by a few, Lumley never took the trouble to read. Living amongst trifles, he made them interesting and novel by his mode of viewing and treating them. And here indeed was *a* talent—it was the talent of social life—the talent of enjoyment to the utmost with the least degree of trouble to himself. Lumley Ferrers was thus exactly one of those men whom everybody calls exceedingly clever, and yet it would puzzle one to say in what he was so clever. It was, indeed, that nameless power which belongs to ability, and which makes one man superior, on the whole, to another, though in many details by no means remarkable. I think it is Goethe who says somewhere, that, in reading the life of the greatest genius, we always find that he was acquainted with some men superior to himself, who yet never attained to general distinction. To the class of these mystical superior men, Lumley Ferrers might have belonged; for though an ordinary journalist would have beaten him in the arts of composition, few men of genius, however eminent, could have felt themselves above Ferrers in the ready grasp and plastic vigor of natural intellect. It only remains to be said of this singular young man, whose character as yet was but half developed, that he had seen a great deal of the world, and could live at ease and in content with all tempers and ranks; fox-hunters or scholars, lawyers, or poets, patricians or *parvenus*, it was all one to Lumley Ferrers.

Ernest was, as usual, in his own room, when he heard, along the corridor without, all that indefinable bustling noise which announces an arrival. Next came a most ringing laugh, and then a sharp, clear, vigorous voice, that ran through his ears like a dagger. Ernest was immediately aroused to all the majesty of indignant sullenness. He walked out on the terrace of the portico, to avoid the repetition of the disturbance; and once more settled back into his broken and hypochondriacal reveries:—Pacing to and fro that part of the peristyle which occupied the more retired wing of the house, with his arms folded, his eyes downcast, his brows knit, and all the angel darkened on that countenance, which formerly looked as if, like truth, it could shame the devil and defy the world, Ernest followed the evil thought that mastered him, through the Valley of the Shadow. Suddenly he was aware of something—some obstacle which he had not previously encountered. He started, and saw before him a young man, of plain dress, gentlemanlike appearance, and striking countenance.

"Mr. Maltravers, I think," said the stranger, and Ernest recognized the voice that had so disturbed him; "this is lucky; we can now introduce ourselves, for I find Cleveland means us to be intimate. Mr. Lumley Ferrers, Mr. Ernest Maltravers. There now, I am the elder, so I first offer my hand, and grin properly. People always grin when they make a new acquaintance! Well, that's settled, Which way are you walking!"

Maltravers could, when he chose it, be as stately as if he had never been out of England. He now drew himself up in displeased astonishment; extricated his hand from his gripe of Ferrers, and, saying, very coldly, "Excuse me, sir, I am busy," stalked back to his chamber. He threw himself into his chair, and was presently forgetful of his late annoyance, when, to his inexpressible amazement and wrath, he heard again the sharp, clear voice close at his elbow.

Ferrers had followed him through the

French casements into the room. "You are busy, you say, my dear fellow. I want to write some letters: we sha'n't interrupt each other—don't disturb yourself:" and Ferrers seated himself at the writing-table, dipped a pen into the ink, arranged blotting-book and paper before him in due order, and was soon employed in covering page after page with the most rapid and hieroglyphical scrawl that ever engrossed a mistress, or perplexed a dun.

"The presuming puppy!" growled Maltravers, half audibly, but effectually roused from himself; and, examining with some curiosity so cool an intruder, he was forced to own that the countenance of Ferrers was not that of a puppy.

A forehead compact and solid as a block of granite, overhung small, bright, intelligent eyes of a light hazel; the features was handsome, yet rather too sharp and fox-like; the complexion, though not highly colored, was of that hardy, healthy hue which generally betokens a robust constitution and high animal spirits; the jaw was massive, and, to a physiognomist, betokened firmness and strength of character; but the lips, full and large, were those of a sensualist, and their restless play and habitual half-smile spoke of gaiety and humor, though when in repose there was in them something furtive and sinister.

Maltravers looked at him in grave silence; but when Ferrers, concluding his fourth letter before another man would have got through his first page, threw down the pen, and looked full at Maltravers, with a good-humored but penetrating stare, there was something so whimsical in the intruder's expression of face, and indeed in the whole scene, that Maltravers bit his lip to restrain a smile, the first he had known for weeks.

"I see you read, Maltravers," said Ferrers, carelessly turning over the volumes on the table. "All very right: we should begin life with books; they multiply the sources of employment; so does capital;—but capital is of no use, unless we live on the interest,—books are waste-paper, unless we spend in action the wisdom we get from thought. Action, Maltravers, action; that is the life for us. At our age we have passion, fancy, sentiment; we can't read them away, nor scribble them away; —we **must** live upon them generously, but **economically.**"

Maltravers was struck; the intruder was not the empty bore he had chosen to fancy him. He roused himself languidly to reply. "Life, *Mr.* Ferrers——"

"Stop, *mon cher*, stop; don't call me Mister: we are to be friends; I hate delaying that which *must* be, even by a superfluous dissyllable; you are Maltravers, I am Ferrers. But you were going to talk about life. Suppose we *live* a little while, instead of talking about it. It wants an hour to dinner; let us stroll into the grounds; I want to get an appetite;—besides, I like nature, when there are no Swiss mountains to climb before one can arrive at a prospect. *Allons!*"

"Excuse," again began Maltravers, half interested, half annoyed.

"I'll be shot if I do. Come."

Ferrers gave Maltravers his hat, wound his arms into that of his new acquaintance, and they were on the broad terrace by the lake before Ernest was aware of it.

How animated, how eccentric, how easy, was Ferrers' talk (for talk it was, rather than conversation, since he had the ball to himself); books, and men, and things; he tossed them about, and played with them like shuttlecocks; and then his egotistical narrative of half a hundred adventures, in which he had been the hero, told so, that you laughed *at* him and laughed with him.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east."—*Milton.*

HITHERTO Ernest had never met with any mind that had exercised a strong influence over his own. At home, at school, at Gottingen, everywhere, he had been the brilliant and wayward leader of others, persuading or commanding wiser and older heads than his own: even Cleveland always yielded to him, though not aware of it. In fact, it seldom happens that we are very strongly influenced by those *much* older than ourselves. It is the Senior, of from two to ten years, that most seduces and enthrals us. He has the same pursuits—views, objects, pleasures, but more art and experience in them all. He goes with us in the path we are ordained to thread, but from

which the elder generation desires to warn us off. There is very little influence where there is not great sympathy. It was now an epoch in the intellectual life of Maltravers. He met for the first time with a mind that controlled his own. Perhaps the physical state of his nerves made him less able to cope with the half-bullying, but thoroughly good-humored imperiousness of Ferrers. Every day this stranger became more and more potential with Maltravers. Ferrers, who was an utter egotist, never asked his new friend to give him his confidence; he never cared three straws about other people's secrets, unless useful to some purpose of his own. But he talked with so much zest about himself—about women and pleasure, and the gay, stirring life of cities,—that the young spirit of Maltravers was roused from its dark lethargy without an effort of its own. The gloomy phantoms vanished gradually—his sense broke from its cloud—he felt once more that God had given the sun to light the day, and even in the midst of darkness had called up the host of stars.

Perhaps no other person could have succeeded so speedily in curing Maltravers of his diseased enthusiasm: a crude or sarcastic unbeliever he would not have listened to; a moderate and enlightened divine he would have disregarded, as a worldly and cunning adjuster of laws celestial with customs earthly. But Lumley Ferrers, who, when he argued, never admitted a sentiment or a simile in reply, who wielded his plain iron logic like a hammer, which, though its metal seemed dull, kindled the ethereal spark with every stroke—Lumley Ferrers was just the man to resist the imagination, and convince the reason, of Maltravers; and the moment the matter came to argument the cure was soon completed; for, however we may darken and puzzle ourselves with fancies and visions, and the ingenuities of fanatical mysticism, no man can mathematically or syllogistically contend that the world which a God made, and a Saviour visited, was designed to be damned!

And Ernest Maltravers one night softly stole to his room and opened the New Testament, and read its heavenly moralities with purged eyes; and when he had done, he fell upon his knees, and prayed the Almighty to pardon the ungrateful heart that, worse than the Atheist's, had confessed His existence, but denied His goodness. His sleep was sweet and his dreams were cheerful. Did he rise to find that the penitence which had shaken his reason would henceforth suffice to save his life from all error? Alas! remorse overstrained has too often re-actions as dangerous; and homely Luther says well, that "the Mind, like the drunken peasant on horseback, when propped on the one side, nods and falls on the other."—All that can be said is, that there are certain crises in life which leave us long weaker; from which the system recovers with frequent revulsion and weary relapse,—but from which, looking back, after years have passed on, we date the foundation of strength or the cure of disease.—It is not to mean souls that creation is darkened by a fear of the anger of Heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.

"There are times when we are diverted out of errors, but could not be preached out of them.—There are practitioners who can cure us of one disorder, though, in ordinary cases, they be but poor physicians—nay, dangerous quacks."—STEPHEN MONTAGUE.

LUMLEY FERRERS had one rule in life; and it was this—to make all things, and all persons, subservient to himself. And Ferrers now intended to go abroad for some years. He wanted a companion, for he disliked solitude: besides, a companion shared the expenses; and a man of eight hundred a year, who desires all the luxuries of life, does not despise a partner in the taxes to be paid for them. Ferrers, at this period, rather liked Ernest than not: it was convenient to choose friends from those richer than himself, and he resolved, when he first came to Temple Grove, that Ernest should be his travelling companion. This resolution formed it was very easy to execute it.

Maltravers was now warmly attached to his new friend, and eager for change. Cleveland was sorry to part with him; but he dreaded a relapse, if the young man were again left upon his hands. Accordingly the guardian's consent was obtained; a travelling-carriage was bought, and fitted up with every imaginable imperial and *malle*. A Swiss (half valet and half courier) was engaged; one thousand a year was allowed to Maltravers;—and one

soft and lovely morning, towards the close of October, Ferrers and Maltravers found themselves midway on the road to Dover.

"How glad I am to get out of England," said Ferrers: "it is a famous country for the rich; but here eight hundred a-year, without a profession, save that of pleasure, goes upon pepper and salt: it is a luxurious competence abroad."

"I think I have heard Cleveland say that you will be rich some day or other."

"O yes; I have what are called expectations! You must know that I have a kind of settlement on two stools, the Well-born and the Wealthy: but between two stools—you recollect the proverb! The present Lord Saxingham, once plain Frank Lascelles, and my father, Mr. Ferrers, were first cousins. Two or three relations good-naturedly died, and Frank Lascelles became an earl; the lands did not go with the coronet; he was poor, and married an heiress. The lady died; her estate was settled on her only child, the handsomest little girl you ever saw. Pretty Florrence, I often wish I could look up to you! Her fortune will be nearly all at her own disposal too when she comes of age: now she's in the nursery, 'eating bread and honey.' My father, less lucky and less wise than his cousin, thought fit to marry a Miss Templeton—a nobody. The Saxingham branch of the family politely dropped the acquaintance. Now my mother had a brother, a clever, plodding fellow, in what is called 'business;' he became rich and richer; but my father and mother died, and were never the better for it. And I came of age, and *worth* (I like that expression) not a farthing more or less than this often-quoted eight hundred pounds a-year. My rich uncle is married, but has no children. I am, therefore, heir-presumptive,—but he is a saint, and close, though ostentatious. The quarrel between uncle Templeton and the Saxinghams still continues.

Templeton is angry if I see the Saxinghams—and the Saxinghams—my Lord, at least—is by no means so sure that I shall be Templeton's heir as not to feel a doubt less I should some day or other sponge upon his lordship for a place. Lord Saxingham is in the administration, you know. Somehow or other, I have an equivocal amphibious kind of place in London society, which I don't like: on one side I am a partrician connection, whom the parvenu branches always incline lovingly to—and on the other side I am a half-dependent cadet, whom the noble relations look civilly shy at. Some day, when I grow tired of travel and idleness, I shall come back and wrestle with these little difficulties, conciliate my methodistical uncle, and grapple with my noble cousin. But now I am fit for something better than getting on in the world. Dry chips, not green wood, are the things for making a blaze! How slow this fellow drives! Holla, you sir! get on! mind, twelve miles to the hour! you shall have sixpence a mile! Give me your purse, Maltravers; I may as well be cashier, being the elder and the wiser man; we can settle accounts at the end of the journey. By Jove, what a pretty girl!"

BOOK SECOND.

Θνητῶν δ' ὄφρα τις ἄνθος ἔχῃ πολυήρατον ἥβης,
Κοῦφον ἔχων θυμὸν, πόλλ' ἀνίλεστα νοεῖ.
SIMONIDES, *in Vit. Hull.*

" He, of wide-blooming youth's fair flower possest,
Owns the vain thoughts—the heart that cannot rest!"

CHAPTER I.

" Il y eut certainment quelque chose de singulier dans mes sentimens pour cette charmante femme." *
—ROUSSEAU.

IT was a brilliant ball at the Palazzo of the Austrian embassy at Naples: and a crowd of those loungers, whether young or old, who attach themselves to the reigning beauty, was gathered round Madame de Ventadour. Generally speaking, there is more caprice than taste in the election of a beauty to the Italian throne. Nothing disappoints a stranger more than to see for the first time the woman to whom the world has given the golden apple. Yet he usually falls at last into the popular idolatry, and passes with inconceivable rapidity from indignant scepticism into superstitious veneration. In fact, a thousand things besides mere symmetry of feature go to make up the Cytherea of the hour . . . tact in society —the charm of manner—a nameless and piquant brilliancy. Where the world find the Graces they proclaim the Venus. Few persons attain pre-eminent celebrity for anything, without some adventitious and extraneous circumstances which have nothing to do with the thing celebrated. Some qualities or some circumstances throw a mysterious or personal charm about them.——" Is Mr. So-and-So really such a genius?"—" Is Mrs. Such-a-One really such a beauty?" you ask incredulously. " Oh, yes," is the answer. " Do you know all *about* him or her? Such a thing is said, or such a thing has happened." The idol is interesting in itself, and therefore its leading and popular attribute is worshipped.

Now Madame de Ventadour was at this time the beauty of Naples; and though fifty women in the room were handsomer, no one would have dared to say so. Even the women confessed her pre-eminence—for she was the most perfect dresser that even France could exhibit. And to no pretentions do ladies ever concede with so little demur, as those which depend upon that feminine art which all study, and in which few excel. Women never allow beauty in a face that has an odd-looking bonnet above it, nor will they readily allow any one to be ugly whose caps are unexceptionable. Madame de Ventadour had also the magic that results from intuitive high breeding, polished by habit to the utmost. She looked and moved the *grande dame*, as if Nature had been employed by Rank to make her so. She was descended from one of the most illustrious houses of France; had married at sixteen a man of equal birth, but old, dull, and pompous—a caricature rather than a portrait of that great French *noblesse*, now almost if not wholly extinct. But her virtue was without a blemish—some said from pride, some said from coldness. Her wit was keen and court-like—lively, yet subdued; for her French high breeding was very different from the lethargic and taciturn impertubability of the English. All silent people can seem conventionally elegant. A groom married a rich lady; he dreaded the ridicule of the guests whom his new rank assembled at his table—an Oxford clergyman gave him this piece of advice, " Wear a black coat and hold your tongue

* There certainly was something singular in my sentiments for this charming woman.

The groom took the hint, and is always considered one of the most gentlemanlike fellows in the county. Conversation is the touchstone of the true delicacy and subtle grace which make the ideal of the moral mannerism of a court.

And there sate Madame de Ventadour, a little apart from the dancers, with the silent English dandy Lord Taunton, exquisitely dressed and superbly tall, bolt upright behind her chair; and the sentimental German Baron Von Schomberg, covered with orders, whiskered and wigged to the last hair of perfection, sighing at her left hand: and the French minister, shrewd, bland, and eloquent, in the chair at her right; and round on all sides pressed, and bowed, and complimented, a crowd of diplomatic secretaries and Italian princes whose bank is at the gaming-table, whose estates are in their galleries, and who sell a picture, as English gentlemen cut down a wood, whenever the cards grow gloomy. The charming de Ventadour! she had attraction for them all! smiles for the silent, badinage for the gay, politics for the Frenchman, poetry for the German—the eloquence of loveliness for all! She was looking her best—the slightest possible tinge of rouge gave a glow to her transparent complexion, and lighted up those large dark sparkling eyes, (with a latent softness beneath the sparkle), seldom seen but in the French—and widely distinct from the unintellectual languish of the Spaniard, or the full and majestic fierceness of the Italian gaze. Her dress of black velvet, and graceful hat with its princely plume, contrasted the alabaster whiteness of her arms and neck. And what with the eyes, the skin, the rich coloring of the complexion, the rosy lips, and the small ivory teeth, no one would have had the cold hypercriticism to observe that the chin was too pointed, the mouth too wide, and the nose, so beautiful in the front face, was far from perfect in the profile.

"Pray was Madame in the Strada Nuova today?" asked the German, with as much sweetness in his voice as if he had been vowing eternal love.

"What else have we to do with our mornings, we women?" replied Madame de Ventadour.

"Our life is a lounge from the cradle to the grave; and our afternoons are but the *type of our career. A promenade* and a crowd, —*voilà tout!* We never see the world except in an open carriage."

"It is the pleasantest way of seeing it," said the Frenchman, drily.

"I doubt it; the worst fatigue is that which comes without exercise."

"Will you do me the honor to waltz!" said the tall English lord, who had a vague idea that Madame de Ventadour meant she would rather dance than sit still. The Frenchman smiled.

"Lord Taunton enforces your own philosophy," said the minister.

Lord Taunton smiled because every one else smiled; and, besides, he had beautiful teeth; but he looked anxious for an answer.

"Not to-night,—I seldom dance. Who is that very pretty woman?—What lovely complexions the English have! And who," continued Madame Ventadour, without waiting for an answer to the first question, "who is that gentleman,—the young one I mean,—leaning against the door?"

"What, with the dark moustache?" said Lord Taunton,—"he is a cousin of mine."

"Oh no; not Colonel Bellfield; I know him —how amusing he is!—no; the gentleman I mean wears no moustache."

"Oh, the tall Englishman with bright eyes and high forehead." said the French minister. "He is just arrived—from the East, I believe."

"It is a striking countenance," said Madame de Ventadour; "there is something chivalrous in the turn of the head. Without doubt, Lord Taunton, he is '*noble*.'"

"He is what you call '*noble*,'" replied Lord Taunton—"that is, what we call a 'gentleman,'—his name is Maltravers—Mr. Maltravers. He lately came of age; and has, I believe, rather a good property."

"Monsieur Maltravers; only Monsieur!" repeated Madame de Ventadour.

"Why," said the French minister, "you understand that the English *gentilhomme* does not require a De or a title to distinguish him from the *Roturier*."

"I know that; but he has an air above a simple *gentlilhomme*. There is something *great* in his look; but it is not, I must own, the conventional greatness of rank: perhaps he would have looked the same had he been born a peasant."

"You don't think him handsome!" said Lord Taunton, almost angrily, (for he was one of the Beauty-men, and Beauty-men are sometimes jealous).

"Handsome! I did not say that," replied Madame de Ventadour, smiling; "it is rather a fine head than a handsome face. Is he clever, I wonder?—but all you English, milord, are well educated."

"Yes, profound—profound; we are profound, not superficial," replied Lord Taunton, drawing down his wristbands.

Will Madame de Ventadour allow me to present to her one of my countrymen?" said the English minister, approaching—"Mr. Maltravers."

Madame de Vertandour half smiled and half blushed, as she looked up, and saw bent admiringly upon her the proud and earnest countenance she had remarked.

The introduction was made—a few monosyllables exchanged. The French diplomatist rose and walked away with the English one. Maltravers succeeded to the vacant chair.

"Have you been long abroad?" asked Madame de Ventadour.

"Only four years; yet long enough to ask whether I should not be most abroad in England."

"You have been in the East—I envy you. And Greece, and Egypt,—all the associations! You have travelled back into the Past; you have escaped, as Madame D'Epinay wished, out of civilization and into romance."

"Yet Madame D'Epinay passed her own life in making pretty romances out of a very agreeable civilization," said Maltravers, smiling.

"You know her memoirs, then," said Madame de Ventadour, slightly coloring. "In the current of a more exciting literature, few have had time for the second-rate writings of a past ceutury."

"Are not those second-rate performances often the most charming," said Maltravers, "when the mediocrity of the intellect seems almost as if it were the effect of a touching, though too feeble, delicacy of sentiment? Madame D'Epinay's memoirs are of this character. She was not a virtuous woman—but she felt virtue and loved it; she was not a woman of genius—but she was tremblingly alive to all the influences of genius. Some people seem born with the temperament and the tastes of genius, without its creative power; they have its nervous system, but something is wanting in the intellectual. They feel acutely, yet express tamely. These persons always have in their character an unspeakable kind of pathos—a court civilization produces many of them—and the French memoirs of the last century are particularly fraught with such examples. This is interesting—the struggle of sensitive minds against the lethargy of a society, dull yet brilliant, that *glares* them, as it were, to sleep. It comes home to us! for," added Maltravers, with a slight change of voice, "how many of us fancy we see our own image in the mirror!"

And where was the German Baron?—flirting at the other end of the room. And the English lord?—dropping monosyllables to dandies by the door-way. And the minor satelites?—dancing, whispering, making love, or sipping lemonade. And Madame de Ventadour was alone with the young stranger in a crowd of eight hundred persons; and their lips spoke of sentiment, and their eyes involuntarily applied it!

While they were thus conversing, Maltravers was suddenly startled by hearing close behind him, a sharp, significant voice, saying in French, "Hein, hein! I've my suspicions—I've my suspicions."

Madame de Ventadour looked round with a smile. "It is only my husband," said she, quietly; "let me introduce him to you."

Maltravers rose and bowed to a little thin man, most elaborately dressed, with an immense pair of spectacles upon a long sharp nose.

"Charmed to make your acquaintance, sir!" said Monsieur de Ventadour. "Have you been long in Naples? .... Beautiful weather—won't last long—hein, hein, I've my suspicions! No news as to your parliament—be dissolved soon! Bad opera in London this year;—hein, hein—I've my suspicions."

This rapid monologue was delivered with appropriate gesture. Each new sentence Mons. de Ventadour began with a sort of bow, and when it dropped in the almost invariable conclusion affirmative of his shrewdness and incredulity, he made a mystical sign with his forefinger by passing it upward in a parallel

line with his nose, which at the same time performed its own part in the ceremony by three convulsive twitches, that seemed to shake the bridge to its base.

Maltravers looked with mute surprise upon the connubial partner of the graceful creature by his side, and Mons. de Ventadour, who had said as much as he thought necessary, wound up his eloquence by expressing the rapture it would give him to see Mons. Maltravers at his hotel. Then, turning to his wife, he began assuring her of the lateness of the hour, and the expediency of departure. Maltravers glided away, and as he regained the door was seized by our old friend, Lumley Ferrers. "Come, my dear fellow," said the latter; "I have been waiting for you this half hour. *Allons*. But, perhaps, as I am dying to go to bed, you have made your mind to stay supper. Some people have no regard for other people's feelings."

"No, Ferrers, I'm at your service;" and the young men descended the stairs and passed along the Chiaja towards their hotel. As they gained the broad and open space on which it stood, with the lovely sea before them, sleeping in the arms of the curving shore, Maltravers, who had hitherto listened in silence to the volubility of his companion, paused abruptly.

"Look at that sea, Ferrers..... What a scene!—what delicious air! How soft this moonlight! Can you not fancy the old Greek adventurers, when they first colonized this divine Parthenope—the darling of the ocean—gazing along those waves, and pinning no more for Greece?"

"I cannot fancy anything of the sort," said Ferrers..... "And, depend upon it, the said gentlemen, at this hour of the night, unless they were on some piratical excursion—for they were cursed ruffians, those old Greek colonists—were fast asleep in their beds."

"Did you ever write poetry, Ferrers?"

"To be sure; all clever men have written poetry once in their lives—small-pox and poetry—they are our two juvenile diseases."

"And did you ever *feel* poetry?"

"Feel it!"

"Yes; if you put the moon into your verses, did you first feel it shining into your heart?"

"My dear Maltravers, if I put the moon into my verses, in all probability it was to rhyme to noon. 'The night was at her noon'—is a capital ending for the first hexameter—and the moon is booked for the next stage. Come in."

"No, I shall stay out."

"Don't be nonsensical."

"By moonlight there is no nonsense like common sense."

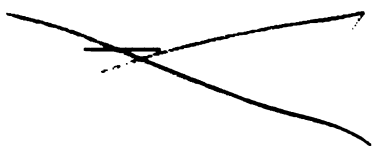
"What we, who have climbed the Pyramids, and sailed up the Nile, and seen magic at Cairo, and been nearly murdered, bagged, and Bosphorized at Constantinople, is it for us, who have gone through so many adventures, looked on so many scenes, and crowded into four years events that would have satisfied the appetite of a cormorant in romance, if it had lived to the age of a phœnix;—is it for us to be doing the pretty and sighing to the moon, like a black-haired appentice without a neckcloth, on board of the Margate hoy? Nonsense, I say—we have lived too much not to have lived away our green sickness of sentiment."

"Perhaps you are right, Ferrers," said Maltravers, smiling. "But I can still enjoy a beautiful night."

"Oh, if you like flies in *your* soup, as the man said to his guest, when he carefully replaced those entomological blackamoors in the tureen, after helping himself—If you like flies in your soup, well and good—*buona notte*."

Ferrers certainly was right in his theory, that when we have known real adventures we grow less morbidly sentimental. Life is a sleep in which we dream most at the commencement and the close—the middle part absorbs us too much for dreams. But still, as Maltravers said, we can enjoy a fine night, especially on the shores of Naples.

Maltravers paced musingly to and fro for some time. His heart was softened—old rhymes rang in his ear—old memories passed through his brain. But the sweet dark eyes of Madame de Ventadour shone forth through every shadow of the past. Delicious intoxication—the draught of the rose-colored phial—which is fancy, but seems love!



CHAPTER II.

"Then 'gan the Palmer thus—'Most wretched man
That to affections dost the bridle lend:
In their beginning they are weak and wan,
But soon, through suffrance, growe to fearfull end;
While they are weak, betimes with them contend.'"
—SPENSER.

MALTRAVERS went frequently to the house of Madame de Ventadour—it was open twice a-week to the world, and thrice a-week to friends. Maltravers was soon of the latter class. Madame de Ventadour had been in England in her childhood, for her parents had been *émigrés*. She spoke English well and fluently, and this pleased Maltravers; for though the French language was sufficiently familiar to him, he was like most who are more vain of the mind than the person, and proudly averse to hazarding his best thoughts in the domino of a foreign language. We don't care how faulty the accent, or how incorrect the idiom, in which we talk nothings; but if we utter any of the poetry within us, we shudder at the risk of the most trifling solecism.

This was especially the case with Maltravers; for besides being now somewhat ripened from his careless boyhood into a proud and fastidious man, he had a natural love for the Becoming. This love was unconsciously visible in trifles; it is the natural parent of Good Taste. And it was indeed an inborn good taste which redeemed Ernest's natural carelessness in those personal matters, in which young men usually take a pride. An habitual and soldier-like neatness, and a love of order and symmetry, stood with him in the stead of elaborate attention to equipage and dress.

Maltravers had not thought twice in his life whether he was handsome or not; and, like most men who have a knowledge of the gentler sex, he knew that beauty had little to do with engaging the love of women. The air, the manner, the tone, the conversation, the something that interests and the something to be proud of, these are the attributes of the man to be loved. And the Beauty-man is, nine times out of ten, little more than the oracle of his aunts, and the "*sitch* a love" of the housemaids!

To return from this digression, Maltravers was glad that he could talk in his own language to Madame de Ventadour; and the conversation between them generally began in French, and glided away into English. Madame de Ventadour was eloquent, and so was Maltravers; yet a more complete contrast in their mental views and conversational peculiarities can scarcely be conceived. Madame de Ventadour viewed everything as a woman of the world; she was brilliant thoughtful, and not without delicacy and tenderness of sentiment; still all was cast in a worldly mould. She had been formed by the influences of society, and her mind betrayed its education. At once witty and melancholy, (no uncommon union), she was a disciple of the sad but caustic philosophy produced by *Satiety*. In the life she led, neither her heart nor her head was engaged; the faculties of both were irritated, not satisfied or employed. She felt somewhat too sensitively the hollowness of the great world, and had a low opinion of Human Nature. In fact, she was a woman of the French Memoirs,—one of those charming and *spirituelles* Aspasias of the Boudoir who interest us by their subtlety, tact, and grace, their exquisite tone of refinement, and are redeemed from the superficial and frivolous, partly by a consummate knowledge of the social system in which they move, and partly by a half-concealed and touching discontent of the trifles on which their talents and affections are wasted. These are the women who, after a youth of false pleasure, often end by an old age of false devotion. They are a class peculiar to those ranks and countries in which shines and saddens that gay and unhappy thing—*a woman without a home!*

Now this was a specimen of life—this Valerie de Ventadour—that Maltravers had never yet contemplated, and Maltravers was perhaps equally new to the Frenchwoman. They were delighted with each other's society, although it so happened that they never agreed.

Madame de Ventadour rode on horseback, and Maltravers was one of her usual companions. And oh, the beautiful landscapes through which their daily excursions lay!

Maltravers was an admirable scholar. The stores of the immortal dead were as familiar to him as his own language. The poetry, the philosophy, the manner of thought and habits of life—of the graceful Greek and the luxurious Roman—were a part of knowledge that constituted a common and household portion

of his own associations and peculiarities of thought. He had saturated his intellect with the Pactolus of old—and the grains of gold came down from the classic Tmolus with every tide. This knowledge of the dead, often so useless, has an unexpressible charm when it is applied to the places where the Dead lived. We care nothing about the ancients on Highgate Hill—but at Baiæ, Pompeii, by the Virgilian Hades, the ancients are society with which we thirst to be familiar. To the animated and curious Frenchwoman what a cicerone was Ernest Maltravers! How eagerly she listened to accounts of a life more elegant than that of Paris!—of a civilization which the world never can know again! So much the better;—for it was rotten at the core, though most brilliant in the complexion. Those cold names and unsubstantial shadows which Madame de Ventadour had been accustomed to yawn over in skeleton histories, took from the eloquence of Maltravers the breath of life—they glowed and moved—they feasted and made love—were wise and foolish, merry and sad, like living things. On the other hand, Maltravers learned a thousand new secrets of the existing and actual world from the lips of the accomplished and observant Valerie. What a new step in the philosophy of life does a young man of genius make, when he first compares his theories and experience with the intellect of a clever woman of the world! Perhaps it does not elevate him, but how it enlightens and refines!—what numberless minute yet important mysteries in human character and practical wisdom does he drink unconsciously from the sparkling *persiflage* of such a companion! Our education is hardly ever complete without it.

"And so you think these stately Romans were not, after all, so dissimilar to ourselves?" said Valerie, one day, as they looked over the same earth and ocean along which had roved the eyes of the voluptuous but august Lucullus.

"In the last days of their Republic, a *coup-d'œil* of their social date might convey to us a general notion of our own. Their system, like ours—a vast aristocracy heaved and agitated, but kept ambitious and intellectual, by the great democratic ocean which roared below and around it. An immense distinction between rich and poor—a nobility sumptuous, *wealthy, cultivated,* yet scarcely elegant or refined;—a people with mighty aspirations for more perfect liberty, but always liable, in a crisis, to be influenced and subdued by a deep-rooted veneration for the very aristocracy against which they struggled;—a ready opening through all the walls of custom and privilege, for every description of talent and ambition; but so strong and universal a respect for wealth; that the finest spirit grew avaricious, griping, and corrupt, almost unconsciously; and the man who rose from the people did not scruple to enrich himself out of the abuses he affected to lament; and the man who would have died for his country could not help thrusting his hands into her pockets.

Cassius, the stubborn and thoughtful patriot, with his heart of iron, had, you remember, an itching palm. Yet, what a blow to all the hopes and dreams of a world was the overthrow of the free party after the death of Cæsar! What generations of freemen fell at Philippi! In England, perhaps, we may have ultimately the same struggle; in France, too, (perhaps a larger stage, with far more inflammable actors), we already perceive the same war of elements which shook Rome to her centre, which finally replaced the generous Julius with the hypocritical Augustus, which destroyed the colossal patricians to make way for the glittering dwarfs of a court, and cheated a people out of the substance with the shadow of liberty. How it may end in the modern world, who shall say? But while a nation has already a fair degree of constitutional freedom, I believe no struggle so perilous and awful as that between the aristocratic and the democratic principle. A people against a despot—*that* contest requires no prophet; but the change from an aristocratic to a democratic commonwealth is indeed the wide, unbounded prospect upon which rest shadows, clouds, and darkness. If it fail—for centuries is the dial hand of Time put back; if it succeed——"

Maltravers paused.

"And if it succeed?" said Valerie.

"Why, then, man will have colonized Utopia!" replied Maltravers.

"But at least, in modern Europe," he continued, "there will be fair room for the experiment. For we have not that curse of slavery which, more than all else, vitiated every system of the ancients, and kept the rich and the poor alternately at war; and we

have a press, which is not only the safety-valve of the passions of every party, but the great note-book of the experiments of every hour—the homely, the invaluable ledger of losses and of gains. No; the people who keep that tablet well never can be bankrupt. And the society of those old Romans: their daily passions—occupations—humors!—why, the satire of Horace is the glass of our own follies! We may fancy his easy pages written in the Chaussée d'Antin, or May-fair; but there was one thing that will ever keep the ancient world dissimilar from the modern."

"And what is that?"

"The ancients knew not that delicacy in the affections which characterizes the descendants of the Goths," said Maltravers, and his voice slightly trembled; "they gave up to the monopoly of the senses what ought to have had an equal share in the reason and the imagination. Their love was a beautiful and wanton butterfly; but not the butterfly which is the emblem of the soul."

Valerie sighed. She looked timidly into the face of the young philosopher, but his eyes were averted.

"Perhaps," she said, after a short pause, "we pass our lives more happily without love than with it. And in our modern social system," (she continued, thoughtfully, and with profound truth, though it is scarcely the conclusion to which a woman often arrives), "I think we have pampered Love to too great a preponderance over the other excitements of life. As children we are taught to dream of it; in youth, our books, our conversation, our plays, are filled with it. We are trained to consider it the essential of life; and yet, the moment we come to actual experience, the moment we indulge this inculcated and stimulated craving, nine times out of ten we find ourselves wretched and undone. Ah, believe me, Mr. Maltravers, this is not a world in which we should preach up, too far, the philosophy of Love!"

"And does Madame de Ventadour speak from experience?" asked Maltravers, gazing earnestly upon the changing countenance of his companion.

"No; and I trust that I never may!" said Valerie, with great energy.

Ernest's lip curled slightly, for his pride was touched.

"I could give up many dreams of the future," said he, "to hear Madame de Ventadour revoke that sentiment."

"We have outridden our companions, Mr. Maltravers," said Valerie, coldly, and she reined in her horse. "Ah, Mr. Ferrers," she continued, as Lumley and the handsome German Baron now joined her, "you are too gallant; I see you imply a delicate compliment to my horsemanship, when you wish me to believe you cannot keep up with me: Mr. Maltravers is not so polite."

"Nay," returned Ferrers, who rarely threw away a compliment without a satisfactory return, "Nay, you and Maltravers appeared lost among the old Romans: and our friend the Baron took that opportunity to tell me of all the ladies who adored him."

"Ah, Monsieur Ferrare, *que vous êtes malin!*" said Schomberg, looking very much confused.

"*Malin!* no; I spoke from no envy: *I* never was adored, thank Heaven! What a bore it must be!"

"I congratulate you on the sympathy between yourself and Ferrers," whispered Maltravers to Valerie.

Valerie laughed; but during the rest of the excursion she remained thoughtful and absent, and for some days their rides were discontinued. Madame de Ventadour was not well.

CHAPTER III.

"O Love, forsake me not;
Mine were a lone dark lot
Bereft of thee."
—HEMANS, *Genius singing to Love.*

I FEAR that as yet Ernest Maltravers had gained little from Experience, except a few current coins of worldly wisdom (and not very valuable those!) while he had lost much of that nobler wealth with which youthful enthusiasm sets out on the journey of life. Experience is an open giver, but a stealthy thief. There is, however, this to be said in her favor, that we retain her gifts; and if we ever demand restitution in earnest, 'tis ten to one but what we recover her thefts. Maltravers had lived in lands where public opinion is neither strong in its influence, nor rigid in its canons; and that does not make a man better. Moreover,

thrown headlong amidst the temptations that make the first ordeal of youth, with ardent passions and intellectual superiority, he had been led by the one into many errors, from the consequences of which the other had delivered him; the necessity of roughing it through the world—of resisting fraud to-day, and violence to-morrow,—had hardened over the surface of his heart, though at bottom the springs were still fresh and living He had lost much of his chivalrous veneration for women, for he had seen them less often deceived than deceiving. Again, too, the last few years had been spent without any high aims or fixed pursuits. Maltravers had been living on the capital of his faculties and affections in a wasteful speculating spirit. It is a bad thing for a clever and ardent man not to have from the onset some paramount object of life.

All this considered, we can scarcely wonder that Maltravers should have fallen into an involuntary system of pursuing his own amusements and pursuits, without much forethought of the harm or the good they were to do to others or himself. The moment we lose forethought, we lose sight of duty; and though it seems like a paradox, we can seldom be careless without being selfish.

In seeking the society of Madame de Ventadour, Maltravers obeyed but the mechanical impulse that leads the idler towards the companionship which most pleases his leisure. He was interested and excited; and Valerie's manners, which to-day flattered, and to-morrow piqued him, enlisted his vanity and pride on the side of his fancy. But although Monsieur de Ventadour, a frivolous and profligate Frenchman, seemed utterly indifferent as to what his wife chose to do; and in the society in which Valerie lived, almost every lady had her cavalier; yet Maltravers would have started with incredulity or dismay had any one accused him of a systematic design on her affections. But he was living with the world, and the world affected him as it almost always does every one else. Still he had, at times, in his heart, the feeling that he was not fulfilling his proper destiny and duties; and when he stole from the brilliant resorts of an unworthy and heartless pleasure, he was ever and anon haunted by his old familiar aspirations for the Beautiful, the Virtuous, and the Great. However, hell is paved with good intentions; and so, in the meanwhile, Ernest Maltravers surrendered himself to the delicious presence of Valerie de Ventadour.

One evening, Maltravers, Ferrers, the French minister, a pretty Italian, and the Princess di ——, made the whole party collected at Madame de Ventadour's. The conversation fell upon one of the tales of scandal relative to English persons, so common on the continent.

"Is it true, Monsieur," said the French minister, gravely, to Lumley, "that your countrymen are much more immoral than other people? It is very strange, but in every town I enter, there is always some story in which *les Anglais* are the heroes. I hear nothing of French scandal—nothing of Italian—*toujours les Anglais.*"

"Because we are shocked at these things, and make a noise about them, while you take them quietly. Vice is our episode—your epic."

"I suppose it is so," said the Frenchman, with affected seriousness. "If we cheat at play, or flirt with a fair lady, we do it with decorum, and our neighbors think it no business of theirs. But you treat every frailty you find in your countrymen as a public concern, to be discussed and talked over, and exclaimed against; and told to all the world."

"I like the system of scandal," said Madame de Ventadour, abruptly, "say what you will; the policy of fear keeps many of us virtuous. Sin might not be odious, if we did not tremble at the consequence even of appearances."

"Hein, hein," grunted Monsieur de Ventadour, shuffling into the room. "How are you! —how are you! Charmed to see you. Dull night—I suspect we shall have rain. Hein, hein. Aha, Monsieur Ferrers, *comment ça va-t-il?* will you give me my revenge at *écarté?* I have my suspicions that I am in luck to-night. Hein, hein."

"*Ecarté!*—well, with pleasure," said Ferrers.

Ferrers played well!

The conversation ended in a moment. The little party gathered round the table—all, except Valerie and Maltravers. The chairs that were vacated left a kind of breach between them; but still they were next to each other, and they felt embarrassed, for they felt alone.

"Do you never play?" asked Madame de Ventadour, after a pause.

"I *have* played," said Maltravers, "and I know the temptation. I dare not play now. I love the excitement, but I have been humbled at the debasement: it is a moral drunkenness that is worse than the physical."

"You speak warmly."

"Because I feel keenly. I once won of a man I respected, who was poor. His agony was a dreadful lesson to me. I went home, and was terrified to think I had felt so much pleasure in the pain of another. I have never played since that night."

"So young and so resolute!" said Valerie, with admiration in her voice and eyes; "you are a strange person. Others would have been cured by losing, you were cured by winning. It is a fine thing to have principle at your age, Mr. Maltravers."

"I fear it was rather pride than principle," said Maltravers. "Error is sometimes sweet; but there is no anguish like an error of which we feel ashamed. I cannot submit to blush for myself."

"Ah!" muttered Valerie; "this is the echo of my own heart!" She rose and went to the window. Maltravers paused a moment, and followed her. Perhaps he half thought there was an invitation in the movement.

There lay before them the still street, with its feeble and unfrequent lights; beyond, a few stairs, struggling through an atmosphere unusually clouded, brought the murmuring ocean partially into sight. Valerie leaned against the wall, and the draperies of the window veiled her from all the guests, save Maltravers; and between her and himself was a large marble vase filled with flowers; and by that uncertain light Valerie's brilliant cheek looked pale, and soft, and thoughtful. Maltravers never before felt so much in love with the beautiful Frenchwoman.

"Ah, madam!" said he, softly; "there is one error, if it be so, that never can cost me shame."

"Indeed!" said Valerie, with an unaffected start, for she was not aware he was so near her. As she spoke she began plucking (it is a common woman's trick) the flowers from the vase between her and Ernest. That small, delicate, almost transparent hand!—Maltravers gazed upon the hand, then on the countenance, then on the hand again. The scene swam before him, and, involuntarily and as by an irresistible impulse, the next moment the hand was in his own.

"Pardon me—pardon me," said he, falteringly; "but that error is in the feelings that I know for you."

Valerie lifted on him her large and radiant eyes, and made no answer.

Maltravers went on. "Chide me, scorn me, hate me if you will. Valerie, I love you!"

"Valerie drew away her hand, and still remained silent.

"Speak to me," said Ernest, leaning forward; "one word, I implore you—speak to me!"

He paused,—still no reply; he listened breathlessly—he heard her sob. Yes; that proud, that wise, that lofty woman of the world, in that moment, was as weak as the simplest girl that ever listened to a lover. But how different the feelings that made her weak?—what soft and what stern emotions were blent together!

"Mr. Maltravers," she said, recovering her voice, though it sounded hollow, yet almost unnaturally firm and clear—"the die is cast, and I have lost for ever the friend for whose happiness I cannot live, but for whose welfare I would have died; I should have forseen this, but I was blind. No more—no more; see me to-morrow, and leave me now!"

"But, Valerie——"

"Ernest Maltravers," said she, laying her hand lightly on his own; "*there is no anguish like an error of which we feel ashamed!*"

Before he could reply to this citation from his own aphorism, Valerie had glided away; and was already seated at the card-table, by the side of the Italian princess.

Maltravers also joined the group. He fixed his eyes on Madame de Ventadour, but her face was calm,—not a trace of emotion was discernible. Her voice, her smile, her charming and courtly manner, all were as when he first beheld her.

"These women—what hypocrites they are!" muttered Maltravers to himself; and his lip writhed into a sneer, which had of late often forced away the serene and gracious expression of his earlier years, ere he knew what it was to despise. But Maltravers mistook the woman he dared to scorn.

He soon withdrew from the palazzo, and

sought his hotel. There, while yet musing in his dressing room, he was joined by Ferrers. The time had passed when Ferrers had exercised an influence over Maltravers; the boy had grown up to be the equal of the man, in the exercise of that two-edged sword—the reason. And Maltravers now felt, unalloyed, the calm consciousness of his superior genius. He could not confide to Ferrers what had passed between him and Valerie. Lumley was too *hard* for a confidant in matters where the heart was at all concerned. In fact, in high spirits, and in the midst of frivolous adventures, Ferrers was charming. But in sadness, or in the moments of deep feeling, Ferrers was one whom you would wish out of the way.

"You are sullen to night, *mon cher*," said Lumley, yawning; "I suppose you want to go to bed—some persons are so ill-bred, so selfish, they never think of their friends. Nobody asks me what I won at *écarté*. Don't be late to-morrow—I hate breakfasting alone, and *I* am never later than a quarter before nine—I hate egotistical, ill-mannered people. Good night.

With this, Ferrers sought his own room; there, as he slowly undressed, he thus soliloquized:—"I think I have put this man to all the use I can make of him. We don't pull well together any longer; perhaps I myself am a little tired of this sort of life. That is not right. I shall grow ambitious by and by; but I think it a bad calculation not to make the most of youth. At four or five-and-thirty it will be time enough to consider what one ought to be at fifty.

CHAPTER IV.

* * * * "Most dangerous
Is that temptation that does goad us on
To sin, in loving virtue."—*Measure for Measure.*

See her to-morrow!—that morrow "is come!" thought Maltravers, as he rose the next day from a sleepless couch. Ere yet he had obeyed the impatient summons of Ferrers, who had thrice sent to say that "*he* never kept people waiting," his servant entered with a packet from England, that had just arrived by one of those rare couriers who sometimes honor that Naples, which *might* be so lucrative a mart to English commerce, if Neapolitan kings cared for trade, or English senators for "foreign politics." Letters from stewards and bankers were soon got through; and Maltravers reserved for the last an epistle from Cleveland. There was much in it that touched him home. After some dry details about the property to which Maltravers had now succeeded, and some trifling comments upon trifling remarks in Ernest's former letters, Cleveland went on thus:—

"I confess, my dear Ernest, that I long to welcome you back to England. You have been abroad long enough to *see* other countries; do not stay long enough to prefer them to your own. You are at Naples, too—I tremble for you. I know well that delicious, dreaming, holiday-life of Italy, so sweet to men of learning and imagination—so sweet too to youth—so sweet to pleasure! But, Ernest, do you not feel already how it enervates?—how the luxurious *far niente* unfits us for grave exertion? Men may become too refined and too fastidious for useful purposes; and nowhere can they become so more rapidly than in Italy. My dear Ernest, I know you well; you are not made to sink down into a virtuoso, with a cabinet full of cameos and a head full of pictures; still less are you made to be an indolent cicesbeo to some fair Italian, with one passion and two ideas: and I have known men as clever as you, whom that bewitching Italy has sunk into one or other of these insignificant beings. Don't run away with the notion that you have plenty of time before you. You have no such thing. At your age, and with your fortune, (I wish you were not so rich!) the holiday of one year becomes the custom of the next. In England, to be a useful or a distinguished man, you must labor. Now, labor itself is sweet, if we take to it early. We are a hard race, but we are a manly one; and our stage is the most exciting in Europe for an able and an honest ambition. Perhaps you will tell me you are not ambitious now; very possibly—but ambitious you will be; and, believe me, there is no unhappier wretch than a man who is ambitious but disappointed,—who has the desire for fame, but has lost the power to achieve it,—who longs for the goal, but will not, and cannot, put away his slippers to walk to it. What I most fear for you is one of these two evils—an early marriage or a fatal *liaison* with some married woman. The first evil is certainly the least, but for *you* it would still be a great one. With your sensitive romance, with your morbid cravings for the Ideal, domestic happiness would soon grow trite and dull. You would demand new excitement, and become a restless and disgusted man. It is necessary for you to get rid of all the false fever of life, before you settle down to everlasting ties. You do not yet know your own mind; you would choose your partner from some visionary caprice, or momentary impulse, and not from the deep and accurate knowledge of those qualities which would most harmonize with your own character. People, to live happily with each other, must *fit in*, as it were—the proud be mated with the meek, the irritable with the gentle, and so forth. No, my dear Maltravers, do not think of marriage yet awhile; and if there is any danger of it, come over to me immediately. But if I warn you against a lawful tie,

how much more against an illicit one? You are precisely of the age, and of the disposition, which render the temptation so strong and so deadly. With you it might not be the sin of an hour, but the bondage of a life. I know your chivalric honor—your tender heart; I know how faithful you would be to one who had sacrificed for you. But that fidelity, Maltravers, to what a life of wasted talent and energies would it not compel you! Putting aside for the moment (for that needs no comment) the question of the grand immorality—what so fatal to a bold and proud temper, as to be at war with society at the first entrance into life? What so withering to manly aims and purposes, as the giving into the keeping of a woman, who has interest in your love, and interest against your career which might part you at once from her side—the control of your future destinies? I could say more, but I trust what I have said is superfluous; if so, pray assure me of it. Depend upon this, Ernest Maltravers, that if you do not fulfil what nature intended for your fate, you will be a morbid misanthrope, or an indolent voluptuary—wretched and listless in manhood—repining and joyless in old age. But if you do fulfil your fate, you must enter soon into your apprenticeship. Let me see you labor and aspire—no matter what in—what to. Work, work—that is all I ask of you!

"I wish you could see your old country-house; it has a venerable and picturesque, look, and during your minority they have let the ivy cover three sides of it. Montaigne might have lived there.

"Adieu, dearest Ernest,

"Your anxious and affectionate Guardian,

"FREDERICK CLEVELAND."

"P.S.—I am writing a book—it shall last me ten years—it occupies me, but does not fatigue. Write a book yourself."

Maltravers had just finished this letter when Ferrers entered impatiently. "Will you ride out?" said he. "I have sent the breakfast away; I saw that breakfast was a vain hope to-day—indeed, *my* appetite is gone."

"Pshaw!" said Maltravers.

"Pshaw! humph! for my part I like well-bred people."

"I have had a letter from Cleveland."

"And what the deuce has that got to do with the chocolate?"

"Oh, Lumley, you are insufferable; you think of nothing but yourself, and self with you means nothing that is not animal."

"Why, yes; I believe I have some sense," replied Ferrers, complacently. "I know the philosophy of life. All unfledged bipeds are animals, I suppose. If Providence had made me graminivirous, I should have eaten grass; if ruminating, I should have chewed the cud; but as it has made me a carnivorous, culinary, and cachinnatory animal, I eat a cutlet, scold about the sauce, and laugh at you; and this is what *you* call being selfish!"

It was late at noon when Ma himself at the palazzo of Mada dour. He was surprised, but a that he was admitted, for the first that private sanctum which bears neyed title of boudoir. But there little enough of the fine lady's boudoir in the simple morning room of Madame de Ventadour. It was a lofty apartment, stored with books, and furnished, not without claim to grace, but with very small attention to luxury.

Valerie was not there; and Maltravers, left alone, after a hasty glance around the chamber, leaned abstractedly against the wall, and forgot, alas! all the admonitions of Cleveland. In a few moments the door opened and Valerie entered. She was unusually pale, and Maltravers thought her eyelids betrayed the traces of tears. He was touched and his heart smote him.

"I have kept you waiting, I fear," said Valerie, motioning him to a seat at a little distance from that on which she placed herself; "but you will forgive me," she added, with a slight smile. Then, observing he was about to speak, she went on rapidly. "Hear me, Mr. Maltravers—before you speak, hear me! You uttered words last night that ought never to have been addressed to me. You professed to—love me."

"Professed!"

"Answer me," said Valerie, with abrupt energy, "not as man to woman, but as one human creature to another. From the bottom of your heart, from the core of your conscience, I call on you to speak the honest and the simple truth. Do you love me as your heart, your genius, must be capable of loving?"

"I love you truly—passionately!" said Maltravers, surprised and confused, but still with enthusiasm in his musical voice and earnest eyes. Valerie gazed upon him as if she sought to penetrate into his soul. Maltravers went on. "Yes, Valerie, when we first met, you aroused a long dormant and delicious sentiment. But, since then, what deep emotions has that sentiment called forth. Your graceful intellect—your lovely thoughts, wise yet womanly—have completed the conquest your face and voice began. Valerie, I love you. And you—you Valerie—ah! I do not deceive myself—you also——"

"Love!" interrupted Valerie, deeply blushing, but in a calm voice. "Ernest Maltravers, I do not deny it; honestly and frankly I confess the fault. I have examined my heart during the whole of the last sleepless night, and I confess that I love you. Now, then, understand me; we meet no more."

"What!" said Maltravers, falling involuntarily at her feet, and seeking to detain her hand, which he seized. "What! now, when you have given life a new charm, will you as suddenly blast it? No, Valerie; no, I will not listen to you."

Madame de Ventadour rose and said, with a cold dignity, "Hear me calmly, or I quit the room: and all I would now say rest for ever unspoken."

Maltravers rose also, folded his arms haughtily, bit his lip, and stood erect, and confronting Valerie, rather in the attitude of an accuser than a suppliant.

"Madame," said he gravely, "I will offend no more; I will trust to your manner, since I may not believe your words."

"You are cruel," said Valerie, smiling mournfully; "but so are all men. Now let me make myself understood. I was betrothed to Monsieur de Vantadour in my childhood. I did not see him till a month before we married. I had no choice. French girls have none! We were wed. I had formed no other attachment. I was proud and vain; wealth, ambition, and social rank for a time satisfied my faculties and my heart. At length I grew restless and unhappy. I felt that the something of life was wanting. Monsieur de Ventadour's sister was the first to recommend to me the common resource of our sex—at least in France—a lover. I was shocked and startled, for I belong to a family in which women are chaste and men brave. I began, however, to look around me, and examine the truth of the philosophy of vice. I found that no woman who loved honestly and deeply an illicit lover, was happy. I found, too, the hideous profundity of Rochefoucauld's maxim, that a woman—I speak of French women—may live without a lover; but, a lover once admitted, she never goes through life with *only* one. She is deserted; she cannot bear the anguish and the solitude; she fills up the void with a second idol. For her there is no longer a fall from virtue; it is a gliding and involuntary descent from sin to sin, till old age comes on and leaves her without love and without respect. I reasoned calmly, for my passions did not blind my reason. I could not love the egotists around me. I resolved upon my career; and now, in temptation, I will adhere to it. Virtue is my lover, my pride, my comfort, my life of life. Do you love me, and will you rob me of this treasure? I saw you, and for the first time I felt a vague and intoxicating interest in another; but I did not dream of danger. As our acquaintance advanced I formed to myself a romantic and delightful vision. I would be your firmest, your truest friend; your confidant, your adviser—perhaps, in some epochs of life, your inspiration and your guide.

"I repeat that I foresaw no danger in your society. I felt myself a nobler and a better being. I felt more benevolent, more tolerant, more exalted. I saw life through the medium of purifying admiration for a gifted nature, and a profound and generous soul. I fancied we might be ever thus — each to each; one strengthened, assured, supported by the other. Nay, I even contemplated with pleasure the prospect of your future marriage with another —of loving your wife—of contributing with her to your happiness—my imagination made me forget that we are made of clay. Suddenly all these visions were dispelled—the fairy palace, was overthrown, and I found myself awake, and on the brink of the abyss—you loved me, and in the moment of that fatal confession, the mask dropped from my soul, and I felt that you had become too dear to me. Be silent still, I implore you. I do not tell you of the emotions, of the struggles, through which I have passed the last few hours—the crisis of a life. I tell you only of the resolution I formed. I thought it due to you, nor unworthy of myself, to speak the truth. Perhaps it might be more womanly to conceal it; but my heart has something masculine in its nature. I have a great faith in your nobleness. I believe you can sympathize with whatever is best in human weakness. I tell you that I love you—I throw myself upon your generosity; I beseech you to assist my own sense of right—to think well of me, to honor me—and to leave me!"

During the last part of this strange and frank avowal, Valerie's voice had grown inexpressibly touching: her tenderness forced

itself into her manner; and when she ceased, her lip quivered; her tears, repressed by a violent effort, trembled in her eyes—her hands were clasped—her attitude was that of humility, not pride.

Maltravers stood perfectly spell-bound. At length he advanced; dropped on one knee, kissed her hand with an aspect and air of reverential homage, and turned to quit the room in silence; for he would not dare to trust himself to speak.

Valerie gazed at him in anxious alarm. "Oh no, no!" she exclaimed, "do not leave me yet; this is our last meeting—our last. Tell me, at least, that you understand me; that you see, if I am no weak fool, I am also no heartless coquette; tell me that you see I am not as hard as I have seemed; that I have not knowingly trifled with your happiness; that even now I am not selfish. Your love,—I ask it no more! But your esteem—your good opinion. Oh, speak—speak, I implore you!"

"Valerie," said Maltravers, "if I was silent, it was because my heart was too full for words. You have raised all womanhood in my eyes. I did love you—I now venerate and adore. Your noble frankness, so unlike the irresolute frailty, the miserable wiles of your sex, has touched a chord in my heart that has been mute for years. I leave you, to think better of human nature. Oh!" he continued, "hasten to forget all of me that can cost you a pang. Let me still, in absence and in sadness, think that I retain in your friendship—let it be friendship only—the inspiration, the guide of which you spoke; and if, hereafter, men shall name me with praise and honor, feel, Valerie, feel that I have comforted myself for the loss of your love by becoming worthy of your confidence—your esteem. Oh, that we had met earlier, when no barrier was between us!"

"Go, go, *now*," faltered Valerie, almost choked with her emotions; "may Heaven bless you! Go!"

Maltravers muttered a few inaudible and incoherent words, aud quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER V.

"The men of sense, those idols of the shallow, are very inferior to the men of Passions. It is the strong passions which, rescuing us from sloth, can alone impart to us that continuous and earnest attention neces sary to great intellectual efforts."—HELVETIUS.

WHEN Ferrers returned that day from his customary ride, he was surprised to see the lobbies and hall of the apartment which he occupied in common with Maltravers littered with bags and *malles*, boxes and books, and Ernest's Swiss valet directing porters and waiters in a mosaic of French, English and Italian.

"Well!" said Lumley; "and what is all this?"

"Il signore va partir, sare, ah! mon Dieu! —*tout* of a sudden."

"O—h! and where is he now?"

"In his room, sare."

Over the chaos strode Ferrers, and opening the door of his friend's dressing-room without ceremony, he saw Maltravers buried in a fauteuil, with his hands drooping on his knees, his head bent over his breast, and his whole attitude expressive of dejection and exhaustion.

"What is the matter, my dear Ernest? You have not killed a man in a duel?"

"No!"

"What then?—Why are you going away, and whither?"

"No matter; leave me in peace."

"Friendly!" said Ferrers; "very friendly! And what is to become of me—what companion am I to have in this cursed resort of antiquarians and Lazzaroni? You have no feeling, Mr. Maltravers!"

"Will you come with me, then?" said Maltravers, in vain endeavoring to rouse himself.

"But where are you going?"

"Anywhere; to Paris—to London."

"No; I have arranged my plans for the summer. I am not so rich as some people. I hate change: it is so expensive."

"But, my dear fellow——"

"Is this fair dealing with me?" continued Lumley, who, for once in his life, was really angry. "If I were an old coat you had worn for five years, you could not throw me off with more nonchalance."

"Ferrers, forgive me. My honor is concerned. I must leave this place. I trust you will remain my guest here, though in the absence of your host. You know that I have engaged the apartments for the next three months."

"Humph!" said Ferrers; "as that is the case, I may as well stay here. But why so secret? Have you seduced Madame de Ventadour, or has her wise husband his suspicions? Hein, hein!"

Maltravers smothered his disgust at this coarseness; and, perhaps, there is no greater trial of temper than in a *he* friend's gross remarks upon the connections of the heart.

"Ferrers," said he, "if you care for me, breathe not a word disrespectful to Madame de Ventadour: she is an angel!"

"But why leave Naples?"

"Trouble me no more."

"Good day, sir," said Ferrers, highly offended, and he stalked out of the chamber; nor did Ernest see him again before his departure.

It was late that evening when Maltravers found himself alone in his carriage, pursuing by starlight the ancient and melancholy road to Mola di Gaëta.

His solitude was a luxury to Maltravers; he felt an inexpressible sense of release to be freed from Ferrers. The hard sense, the unpliant, though humorous imperiousness, the animal sensuality, of his companion, would have been a torture to him in his present state of mind.

The next morning, when he rose, the orange blossoms of Mola di Gaëta were sweet beneath the window of the inn where he rested. It was now the early spring, and the freshness of the odor, the breathing health of earth and air, it is impossible to describe. Italy itself boasts few spots more lovely than that same Mola di Gaëta—nor does that halcyon sea wear, even at Naples or Sorrento, a more bland and enchanting smile.

So, after a hasty and scarcely-tasted breakfast, Maltravers strolled through the orange groves, and gained the beach; and there, stretched at idle length by the murmuring waves, he resigned himself to thought, and endeavored, for the first time since his parting with Valerie, to collect and examine the state of his mind and feelings. Maltravers, to his own surprise, did not find himself so unhappy as he had expected. On the contrary, a soft and and almost delicious sentiment, which he could not well define, floated over all his memories of the beautiful Frenchwoman. Perhaps the secret was, that while his pride was not mortified, his conscience was not galled—perhaps, also, he had not loved Valerie so deeply as he had imagined. The confession and the separation had happily come before her presence had grown—*the want of a life.* As it was, he felt, as if, by some holy and mystic sacrifice, he had been made reconciled to himself and mankind. He woke to a juster and higher appreciation of human nature, and of woman's nature in especial. He had found honesty and truth, where he might least have expected it—in a woman of a court—in a woman surrounded by vicious and frivolous circles—in a woman who had nothing in the opinion of her friends, her country, her own husband, the social system, in which she moved, to keep her from the concessions of frailty—in a woman of the world—a woman of Paris!—yes, it was his very disappointment that drove away the fogs and vapors that, arising from the marshes of the great world, had gradually settled round his soul. Valerie de Ventadour had taught him not to despise her sex, not to judge by appearances, not to sicken of a low and a hypocritical world. He looked in his heart for the love of Valerie, and he found there the love of Virtue.

Thus, as he turned his eyes inward, did he gradually awaken to a sense of the true impressions engraved there. And he felt the bitterest drop of the deep fountains was not sorrow for himself, but for her. What pangs must that high spirit have endured ere it could have submitted to the avowal it had made! Yet, even in this affliction, he found at last a solace. A mind so strong could support and heal the weakness of the heart. He felt that Valerie de Ventadour was not a woman to pine away in the unresisted indulgence of morbid and unholy emotions. He could not flatter himself that she would not seek to eradicate a love she repented; and he sighed with a natural selfishness, when he owned also that sooner or later she would succeed. "But be it so," said he, half aloud —"I will prepare my heart to rejoice when I learn that she remembers me only as a friend.

Next to the bliss of her love is the pride of her esteem."

Such was the sentiment with which his reveries closed—and with every league that bore him further from the south, the sentiment grew strengthened and confirmed.

Ernest Maltravers felt that there is in the Affections themselves so much to purify and exalt, that even an erring love, conceived without a cold design, and (when its nature is fairly understood) wrestled against with a noble spirit, leaves the heart more tolerant and tender, and the mind more settled and enlarged. The philosophy limited to the reason puts into motion the automata of the closet—but to those whe have the world for a stage, and who find their hearts are the great actors, experience and wisdom must be wrought from the Philosophy of the Passions.

BOOK THIRD.

Υ' 'πόλλων οὐ πανὶ φαίνεται, * * *
Θς μεν 'δη, μέγας οὗτος.

CALLIM. *Ex Hymno in Apollinon.*

"Not to all men Apollo shows himself—
Who sees him—*he* is great!"

CHAPTER I.

* Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears—soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony."
—SHAKESPEARE.

BOAT SONG ON THE LAKE OF COMO.

1.

THE Beautiful Clime!—the Clime of Love!
Thou beautiful Italy!
Like a mother's eyes, the earnest skies
Ever have smiles for thee!
Not a flower that blows, not a beam that glows,
But what is in love with thee!

2.

The beautiful lake, the Larian lake! *
Soft lake like a silver sea,
The Huntress Queen, with her nymphs of sheen,
Never had bath like thee.
See, the Lady of Night and her maids of light,
Even now are mid-deep in thee.

3.

Beautiful child of the lonely hills,
Ever blest may thy slumbers be!
No mourner should tread by thy dreamy bed,
No life bring a care to thee—
Nay, soft to thy bed, let the mourner tread—
And life be a dream like thee!

Such, though uttered in the soft Italian tongue, and now imperfectly translated—such were the notes that floated one lovely evening in summer along the lake of Como. The boat, from which came the song, drifted gently down the sparkling waters, towards the mossy banks of a lawn, whence on a little eminence gleamed the white walls of a villa, backed by vineyards. On that lawn stood a young and handsome woman, leaning on the arm of her husband, and listening to the song. But her delight was soon deepened into one of more personal interest, as the boatmen, nearing the banks, changed their measure, and she felt that the minstrelsy was in honor of herself.

* The ancient name for Como.

SERENADE TO THE SONGSTRESS.

1.

CHORUS.

Softly—oh, soft! let us rest on the oar,
And vex not a billow that sighs to the shore:—
For sacred the spot where the starry waves meet
With the beach, where the breath of the citron is sweet;
There's a spell on the waves that now waft us along
To the last of our Muses, the Spirit of Song.

RECITATIVE.

The Eagle of old renown,
And the Lombard's iron crown,
And Milan's mighty name are ours no more;
But by this glassy water,
Harmonia's youngest daughter,
Still from the lightning saves one laurel to our shore.

2.

CHORUS.

They heard thee, Teresa, the Teuton, the Gaul,
Who have raised the rude thrones of the North on our fall;
They heard thee, and bow'd to the might of thy song,
Like love went thy steps o'er the hearts of the strong,
As the moon to the air, as the soul to the clay,
To the void of this earth was the breath of thy lay.

RECITATIVE.

Honor for aye to her
The bright interpreter
Of Art's great mysteries to the enchanted throng;
While tyrants heard thy strains,
Sad Rome forgot her chains;
The world the sword had lost was conquer'd back by song!

"Thou repentest, my Teresa, that thou hast renounced thy dazzling career for a dull home, and a husband old enough to be thy father," said the husband to the wife, with a smile that spoke confidence in the answer.

"Ah, no! even this homage would have no music to me if thou didst not hear it."

She was a celebrated personage in Italy—the Signora Cesarini, now Madame de Montaigne! Her earlier youth had been spent upon the stage, and her promise of vocal excellence had been most brilliant. But after a brief though splendid career, she married a French gentleman of good birth and fortune, retired from the stage, and spent her life alternately in the gay saloons of Paris, and upon the banks of the dreamy Como, on which her husband had purchased a small but beautiful villa. She still, however, exercised in private her fascinating art; to which—for she was a woman of singular accomplishment and talent—she added the gift of the improvvisatrice. She had just returned for the summer to this lovely retreat, and a party of enthusiastic youths from Milan had sought the lake of Como to welcome her arrival with the suitable homage of song and music. It is a charming relic, that custom of the brighter days of Italy; and I myself have listened, on the still waters of the same lake, to a similar greeting to a greater genius—the queenlike and unrivalled Pasta—and Semiramis of Song! And while my boat paused, and I caught something of the enthusiasm of the serenaders, the boatman touched me, and, pointing to a part of the lake on which the setting sun shed its rosiest smile, he said, "There, Signor, was drowned one of your countrymen—'bellissimo uomo! che fu bello!'"—yes, there, in the pride of his promising youth, of his noble and almost godlike beauty, before the very windows—the very eyes—of his bride—the waves without a frown had swept over the idol of many hearts—the graceful and gallant Locke.* And above his grave was the voluptuous sky, and over it floated the triumphant music. It was as the moral of the Roman poets—calling the living to a holyday over the oblivion of the dead.

As the boat now touched the bank, Madame de Montaigne accosted the musicians, thanked them with a sweet and unaffected earnestness for the compliment so delicately offered, and invited them ashore. The Milanese, who were six in number, accepted the invitation, and moored their boat into the jutting shore. It was then that Monsieur de Montaigne pointed out to the notice of his wife a boat, that had lingered under the shadow of a bank, tenanted by a young man, who had seemed to listen with rapt attention to the music, and who had once joined in the chorus (as it was twice repeated) with a voice so exquisitely attuned, and so rich, in its deep power, that it had awakened the admiration even of the serenaders themselves.

"Does not that gentleman belong to your party?" De Montaigne asked of the Milanese.

"No, Signor, we know him not," was the answer; "his boat came unaware upon us as we were singing."

While this question and answer were going on, the young man had quitted his station, and his oars cut the glassy surface of the lake, just before the place where De Montaigne stood. With the courtesy of his country, the Frenchman lifted his hat; and by his gesture, arrested the eye and oar of the solitary rower. "Will you honor us," he said, "by joining our little party?"

"It is a pleasure I covet too much to refuse," replied the boatman, with a slight foreign accent, and in another moment he was on shore. He was one of remarkable appearance. His long hair floated with a careless grace over a brow more calm and thoughtful than became his years; his manner was unusually quiet and self-collected, and not without a certain stateliness, rendered more striking by the height of his stature, a lordly contour of feature, and a serene but settled expression of melancholy in his eyes and smile. "You will easily believe," said he, "that, cold as my countrymen are esteemed, (for you must have discovered, already, that I am an Englishman), I could not but share in the enthusiasm of those about me, when loitering near the

* Captain William Locke of the Life Guards (the only son of the accomplished Mr. Locke of Norbury Park), distinguished by a character the most amiable, and by a personal beauty that certainly equalled, perhaps surpassed, the highest masterpiece of Grecian Sculpture. He was returning, in a boat, from the town of Como, to his villa on the banks of the lake, when the boat was upset by one of the mysterious under-currents to which the lake is dangerously subjected, and he was drowned in sight of his bride, who was watching his return from the terrace or balcony of their home.

very ground sacred to the inspiration. For the rest, I am residing for the present in yonder villa, opposite to your own; my name is Maltravers, and I am enchanted to think that I am no longer a personal stranger to one whose fame has already reached me."

Madame de Montaigne was flattered by something in the manner and tone of the Englishman, which said a great deal more than his words; and in a few minutes, beneath the influence of the happy continental ease, the whole party seemed as if they had known each other for years. Wines, and fruits, and other simple and unpretending refreshments, were brought out and arranged on a rude table upon the grass, round which the guests seated themselves with their host and hostess, and the clear moon shone over them, and the lake slept below in silver. It was a scene for a Boccaccio or a Claude.

The conversation naturally fell upon music: it is almost the only thing which Italians in general can be said to know—and even that knowledge comes to them, like Dogberry's reading and writing, by nature—for of music, as an *art*, the unprofessional amateurs know but little. As vain and arrogant of the last wreck of their national genius as the Romans of old were of the empire of all arts and arms, they look upon the harmonies of other lands as barbarous; nor can they appreciate or understand appreciation of the mighty German music, which is the proper minstrelsy of a nation of *men*—a music of philosophy, of heroism, of the intellect and the imagination; beside which, the strains of modern Italy are indeed effeminate, fantastic, and artificially feeble. Rossini is the Canova of music, with much of the pretty, with nothing of the grand!

The little party talked, however, of music, with an animation and gusto that charmed the melancholy Maltravers, who for weeks had known no companion save his own thoughts, and with whom, at all times, enthusiasm for any art found a ready sympathy. He listened attentively, but said little; and from time to time, whenever the conversation flagged, amused himself by examining his companions. These six Milanese had nothing remarkable in their countenances or in their talk; they possessed the characteristic energy and volubility of their countrymen, with something of the masculine dignity which distinguishes the Lombard from the Southern, and a little of the French polish, which the inhabitants of Milan seldom fail to contract.

Their rank was evidently that of the middle class; for Milan has a middle class, and one which promises great results hereafter. But they were noways distinguished from a thousand other Milanese whom Maltravers had met in the walks and cafés of their noble city. The host was somewhat more interesting. He was a tall, handsome man, of about eight-and-forty, with a high forehead, and features strongly impressed with the sober character of thought. He had but little of the French vivacity in his manner; and without looking at his countenance, you would still have felt insensibly that he was the oldest of the party. His wife was at least twenty years younger than himself, mirthful and playful as a child, but with a certain feminine and fascinating softness in her unrestrained gestures and sparkling gaiety, which seemed to subdue her natural joyouness into the form and method of conventional elegance. Dark hair carelessly arranged, an open forehead, large black laughing eyes, a small straight nose, a complexion just relieved from the olive by an evanescent yet perpetually recurring blush; a round dimpled cheek, an exquisitely-shaped mouth with small pearly teeth, and a light and delicate figure a little below the ordinary standard, completed the picture of Madame de Montaigne.

"Well," said Signor Tirabaloschi, the most loquacious and sentimental of the guests, filling his glass; "these are hours to think of for the rest of life. But we cannot hope the Signora will long remember that *we* never can forget. Paris, says the French proverb, *est le paradis des femmes;* and in paradise, I take it for granted, we recollect very little of what happened on earth."

"Oh," said Madame de Montaigne, with a pretty musical laugh; "in Paris it is the rage to despise the frivolous life of cities, and to affect *des sentimens romanesques*. This is precisely the scene which our fine ladies and fine writers would die to talk of and to describe. Is it not so, *mon ami?*" and she turned affectionately to De Montaigne.

"True, replied he; "but you are not worthy of such a scene—you laugh at sentiment and romance."

"Only at French sentiment and the romance of the Chaussée d'Antin. You English," she continued, shaking her head at Maltravers, "have spoiled and corrupted us; we are not content to imitate you, we must excel you; we out-horror horror, and rush from the extravagant into the frantic!"

"The ferment of the new school is, perhaps, better than the stagnation of the old," said Maltravers. "Yet even you," addressing himself to the Italians, "who first in Petrarch, in Tasso, and in Ariosto, set to Europe the example of the Sentimental and the Romantic; who built among the very ruins of the classic school—amidst its Corinthian columns and sweeping arches, the spires and battlements of the Gothic—even you are deserting your old models, and guiding literature into newer and wilder paths. 'Tis the way of the world—eternal progress is eternal change."

"Very possibly," said Signor Tirabaloschi, who understood nothing of what was said. "Nay, it is extremely profound; on reflection, it is beautiful—superb: you English are so—so—in short, it is admirable. Ugo Foscolo is a great genius—so is Monti; and as for Rossini,—you know his last opera—*cosa stupenda!*"

Madame de Montaigne glanced at Maltravers, clapped her little hands, and laughed outright. Maltravers caught the contagion, and laughed also. But he hastened to repair the pedantic error he had committed of talking over the heads of the company. He took up the guitar, which, among their musical instruments, the serenaders had brought, and after touching its chords for a few moments, said; "After all, Madame, in your society, and with this moonlit lake before us, we feel as if music were our best medium of conversation. Let us prevail upon these gentlemen to delight us once more."

"You forestall what I was going to ask," said the ex-singer; and Maltravers offered the guitar to Tirabaloschi, who was in fact dying to exhibit his powers again. He took the instrument with a slight grimace of modesty, and then saying to Madame de Montaigne, "There is a song composed by a young friend of mine, which is much admired by the ladies; though, to me, it seems a little too sentimental," sang the following stanzas (as good singers are wont to do) with as much feeling as if he could understand them!—

NIGHT AND LOVE.

When stars are in the quiet skies,
  Then most I pine for thee;
Bend on me, then, thy tender eyes,
  And stars look on the sea!

For thoughts, like waves that glide by night,
  Are stillest where they shine;
Mine earthly love lies hushed in light,
  Beneath the heaven of thine.

There is an hour when angels keep
  Familiar watch on men;
When coarser souls are wrapt in sleep,—
  Sweet spirit, meet me then.

There is an hour when holy dreams,
  Through slumber, fairest glide;
And in that mystic hour, it seems
  Thou shouldst be by my side.

The thoughts of thee too sacred are
  For daylight's common beam;—
I can but know thee as my star,
  My angel, and my dream!

And now, the example set, and the praises of the fair hostess exciting general emulation, the guitar circled from hand to hand, and each of the Italians performed his part:—you might have fancied yourself at one of the old Greek feasts, with the lyre and the myrtle-branch going the round.

But both the Italians and the Englishman felt the entertainment would be incomplete, without hearing the celebrated vocalist and improvvisatrice, who presided over the little banquet; and Madame de Montaigne with a woman's tact, divined the general wish, and anticipated the request that was sure to be made. So she took the guitar from the last singer, and turning to Maltravers, said, "You have heard, of course, some of our more eminent improvvisatori, and therefore if I ask you for a subject it will only be to prove to you that the talent is not general amongst the Italians."

"Ah," said Maltravers, "I have heard, indeed, some ugly old gentlemen with immense whiskers, and gestures of the most alarming ferocity, pour out their vehement impromptus; but I have never yet listened to a young and a handsome lady. I shall only believe the inspiration when I hear it direct from the Muse."

"Well, I will do my best to deserve your compliments—you must give me the theme."

Maltravers paused a moment, and suggested the Influence of Praise on Genius.

The improvvisatrice nodded assent, and after a short prelude broke forth into a wild and varied strain of verse, in a voice so exquisitely sweet, with a taste so accurate, and a feeling so deep, that the poetry sounded to the enchanted listeners like the language that Armida might have uttered. Yet the verses themselves, like all extemporaneous effusions, were of a nature both to pass from the memory and to defy transcription.

When Madame de Montaigne's song ceased, no rapturons plaudits followed—the Italians were too affected by the science, Maltravers by the feeling, for the coarseness of ready praise;—and ere that delighted silence which made the first impulse was broken, a newcomer, descending from the groves that clothed the ascent behind the house, was in the midst of the party.

"Ah, my dear brother," cried Madame de Montainge, starting up, and hanging fondly on the arm of the stranger, "why have you lingered so long in the wood? You, so delicate! And how are you? How pale you seem!"

"It is but the reflection of the moonlight, Teresa," said the intruder. "I feel well." So saying, he scowled on the merry party, and turned as if to slink away.

"No, no," whispered Teresa, "you must stay a moment and be presented to my guests: there is an Englishman here whom you will like—who will *interest* you."

With that she almost dragged him forward, and introduced him to her guests. Signor Cesarini returned their salutations with a mixture of bashfulness and *hauteur*, half-awkward and half-graceful, and muttering some inaudible greeting, sank into a seat and appeared instantly lost in revery. Maltravers gazed upon him, and was pleased with his aspect—which, if not handsome, was strange and peculiar. He was extremely slight and thin—his cheeks hollow and colorless, with a profusion of black silken ringlets that almost descended to his shoulders. His eyes, deeply sunk into his head, were large and intensely brilliant, and a thin moustache, curling downward, gave an additional austerity to his mouth, which was closed with gloomy and half-sarcastic firmness. He was not dressed as people dress in general; but wore a frock of dark camlet, with a large shirt-collar turned down, and a narrow slip of black silk twisted rather than tied round his throat—his nether garment fitted tight to his limbs, and a pair of half-hessians completed his costume. It was evident that the young man (and he was very young—perhaps about nineteen or twenty) indulged that coxcombry of the Picturesque which is the sign of a vainer mind than is the commoner coxcombry of the *Mode*.

It is astonishing how frequently it happens, that the introduction of a single intruder upon a social party is sufficient to destroy all the familiar harmony that existed there before. We see it even when the intruder is agreeable and communicative—but in the present instance, a ghost could scarcely have been a more unwelcoming or unwelcome visitor. The presence of this shy, speechless, supercilious-looking man, threw a damp over the whole group. The gay Tirabaloschi immediately discovered that it was time to depart,—it had not struck any one before, but it certainly *was* late. The Italians began to bustle about, to collect their music, to make fine speeches and fine professions—to bow and to smile—to scramble into their boat, and to push off towards the inn at Como, where they had engaged their quarters for the night. As the boat glided away, and while two of them were employed at the oar, the remaining four took up their instruments and sang a parting glee. It was quite midnight—the hush of all things around had grown more intense and profound—there was a wonderful might of silence in the shining air and amidst the shadows thrown by the near banks and the distant hills over the water. So that as the music chiming in with the oars grew fainter and fainter, it is impossible to describe the thrilling and magical effect it produced.

The party ashore did not speak; there was a moisture, a grateful one, in the bright eyes of Teresa, as she leant upon the manly form of De Montaigne, for whom her attachment was, perhaps, yet more deep and pure for the difference of their ages. A girl who once loves a man, not indeed old, but much older than herself, loves him with such a *looking up* and venerating love! Maltravers stood a little apart from the couple, on the edge of the shelving bank, with folded arms and thoughtful countenance. "How is it," said he, unconscious that he was speaking half aloud, "that the commonest beings of the world

should be able to give us a pleasure so unworldly? What a contrast between those musicians and this music? At this distance, their forms so dimly seen, one might almost fancy the creators of those sweet sounds to be of another mould from us. Perhaps even thus the poetry of the Past rings on our ears—the deeper and the diviner, because removed from the clay which made the poets. O Art, Art! how dost thou beautify and exalt us! what is Nature without thee!"

"You are a poet, Signor," said a soft clear voice beside the soliloquist; and Maltravers started to find that he had had unknowingly, a listener in the young Cesarini.

"No," said Maltravers, "I cull the flowers, I do not cultivate the soil."

"And why not?" said Cesarini, with abrupt energy; "you are an Englishman—*you* have a public—you have a country—you have a living stage, a breathing audience; we, Italians, have nothing but the Dead."

As he looked on the young man, Maltravers was surprised to see the sudden animation which glowed upon his pale features.

"You asked me a question I would fain put to you," said the Englishman, after a pause. "*You*, methinks, are a poet?"

"I have fancied that I might be one. But poetry with us is a bird in the wilderness—it sings from an impulse—the song dies without a listener. Oh that I belonged to a *living* country, France, England, Germany, America, —and not to the corruption of a dead giantess —for such is now the land of the ancient lyre."

"Let us meet again, and soon," said Maltravers, holding out his hand.

Cesarini hesitated a moment, and then accepted and returned the proffered salutation. Reserved as he was, something in Maltravers attracted him; and, indeed, there was that in Ernest which fascinated most of those unhappy eccentrics who do not move in the common orbit of the world.

In a few moments more the Englishman had said farewell to the owners of the villa, and his light boat skimmed rapidly over the tide.

"What do you think of the *Inglese?*" said Madame de Montaigne to her husband, as they turned towards the house. (They said not a word about the Milanese).

"He has a noble bearing for one so young," said the Frenchman, "and seems to have seen the world, and both to have profited and to have suffered by it."

"He will prove an acquisition to our society here," returned Teresa; "he interests me; and you, Castruccio?" turning to seek for her brother; but Cesarini had already, with his usual noiseless step, disappeared within the house.

"Alas, my poor brother!" she replied, "I cannot comprehend him. What does he desire?"

"Fame!" replied De Montaigne, calmly. "It is a vain shadow; no wonder that he disquiets himself in vain."

CHAPTER II.

"Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To strictly meditate the thankless Muse;
Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?"
—MILTON'S *Lycidas.*

THERE is nothing more salutary to active men than occasional intervals of repose,—when we look within, instead of without, and examine almost *insensibly*—(for I hold strict and conscious self-scrutiny a thing much rarer than we suspect)—what we have done—what we are capable of doing. It is settling, as it were, a debtor and creditor account with the Past, before we plunge into new speculations. Such an interval of repose did Maltravers now enjoy. In utter solitude, so far as familiar companionship is concerned, he had for several weeks been making himself acquainted with his own character and mind. He read and thought much, but without any exact or defined object. I think it is Montaigne who says somewhere—"People talk about thinking —but for my part I never think, except when I sit down to write." I believe this is not a very common case, for people who don't write think as well as people who do; but connected, severe, well-developed thought, in contradistinction to vague meditation, must be connected with some tangible plan or object; and therefore we must be either writing men or acting men, if we desire to test the logic, and unfold into symmetrical design the fused colors of our reasoning faculty. Maltravers

did not yet feel this, but he was sensible of some intellectual want. His ideas, his memories, his dreams, crowded thick and confused upon him; he wished to arrange them in order, and he could not. He was overpowered by the unorganized affluence of his own imagination and intellect. He had often, even as a child, fancied that he was formed to do something in the world, but he had never steadily considered what it was to be, whether he was to become a man of books or a man of deeds. He had written poetry when it poured irresistibly from the fount of emotion within, but looked at his effusions with a cold and neglectful eye when the enthusiasm had passed away.

Maltravers was not much gnawed by the desire of fame—perhaps few men of real genius are until artificially worked up to it. There is in a sound and correct intellect, with all its gifts fairly balanced, a calm consciousness of power, a certainty that when its strength is fairly put out, it must be to realize the usual result of strength. Men of second-rate faculties, on the contrary, are fretful and nervous, fidgeting after a celebrity which they do not estimate by their own talents, but by the talents of some one else. They see a tower, but are occupied only with measuring its shadow, and think their own height (which they never calculate) it is to cast as broad a one over the earth. It is the short man who is always throwing up his chin, and is as erect as a dart. The tall man stoops, and the strong man is not always using the dumb-bells.

Maltravers had not yet, then, the keen and sharp yearning for reputation; he had not, as yet, tasted its sweets and bitters — fatal draught, which *once* tasted, begets too often an insatiable thirst! neither had he enemies and decriers whom he was desirious of abashing by merit. And that is a very ordinary cause for exertion in proud minds. He was, it is true, generally reputed clever, and fools were afraid of him: but as he actively interfered with no man's pretensions, so no man thought it necessary to call him a blockhead. At present, therefore, it was quietly and naturally that his mind was working its legitimate way to its destiny of exertion.

He began idly and carelessly to note down his thoughts and impressions; what was once put on the paper, begot new matter; his ideas became more lucid to himself; and the page grew a looking-glass, which presented the likeness of his own features. He began by writing with rapidity and without method. He had no object but to please himself, and to find a vent for an over-charged spirit; and, like most writings of the young, the matter was egotistical. We commence with the small nucleus of passion and experience, to widen the circle afterwards; and, perhaps, the most extensive and universal masters of life and character have begun by being egotists. For there is in a man that has much in him, a wonderfully acute and sensitive perception of his own existence. An imaginative and susceptible person has, indeed, ten times as much life as a dull fellow, "an' he be Hercules." He multiplies himself in a thousand objects, associates each with his own identity, lives in each, and almost looks upon the world with its infinite objects as a part of his individual being. Afterwards, as he tames down, he withdraws his forces into the citadel, but he still has a knowledge of, and an interest in, the land they once covered. He understands other people, for he has lived in other people—the dead and the living;—fancied himself now Brutus and now Cæsar, and thought how *he* should act in almost every imaginable circumstance of life.

Thus, when he begins to paint human characters, esentially different from his own, his knowledge comes to him almost intuitively. It is as if he were describing the mansions in which he himself has formerly lodged, though for a short time. Hence, in great writers of History—of Romance—of the Drama—the *gusto* with which they paint their personages; their creations are flesh and blood, not shadows or machines.

Maltravers was at first, then, an egotist in the matter of his rude and desultory sketches —in the manner, as I said before, he was careless and negligent, as men will be who have not yet found that expression is an art. Still those wild and valueless essays—those rapt and secret confessions of his own heart—were a delight to him. He began to taste the transport, the intoxication of an author. And oh what a luxury is there in that first love of the Muse! that process by which we give a palpable form to the long-intangible visions which have flitted across us;—the beautiful ghost of the ideal within us, which we invoke

in the Gadara of our still closets, with the wand of the simple pen !

It was early noon, the day after he had formed his acquaintance with the De Montaignes, that Maltravers sate in his favorite room;—the one he had selected for his study, from the many chambers of his large and solitary habitation. He sate in a recess by the open window, which looked on the lake; and books were scattered on his table, and Maltravers was jotting down his criticisms on what he read, mingled with his impressions on what he saw. It is the pleasantest kind of composition —the note-book of a man who studies in retirement, who observes in society, who in all things can admire and feel. He was yet engaged in this easy task, when Cesarini was announced and the younger brother of the fair Teresa entered his apartment.

"I have availed myself soon of your invitation," said the Italian.

"I acknowledge the compliment," replied Maltravers, pressing the hand shyly held out to him.

"I see you have been writing—I thought you were attached to literature. I read it in your countenance, I heard it in your voice," said Cesarini, seating himself.

"I have been idly beguiling a very idle leisure, it is true," said Maltravers.

"But you do not write for yourself alone—you have an eye to the great tribunals—Time and the Public."

"Not so, I assure you honestly," said Maltravers, smiling. "If you look at the books on my table, you will see that they are the great masterpieces of ancient and modern lore —these are studies that discourage tyros——"

"But inspire them."

"I do not think so. Models may form our taste as critics, but do not excite us to be authors. I fancy that our own emotions, our own sense of our destiny, make the great lever of the inert matter we accumulate. 'Look in thy heart and write,' said an old English writer,* who did not, however, practice what he preached. And you, Signor——"

"Am nothing, and would be something," said the young man, shortly and bitterly.

"And how does that wish not realize its object ?"

"Merely because I am Italian," said Cesarini. "With us there is no literary public—no vast reading class—we have dilettanti and literati, and students, and even authors; but these make only a coterie, not a public. I have written, I have published; but no one listened to me. I am an author without readers."

"It is no uncommon case in England," said Maltravers.

The Italian continued—"I thought to live in the mouths of men—to stir up thoughts long dumb—to awaken the strings of the old lyre ! In vain. Like the nightingale, I sing only to break my heart with a false and melancholy emulation of other notes."

"There are epochs in all countries," said Maltravers, gently, "when peculiar veins of literature are out of vogue, and when no genius can bring them into public notice. But you wisely said there were two tribunals—the Public and Time. You have still the last to appeal to. Your great Italian historians wrote for the unborn—their works not even published till their death. That indifference to living reputation has in it, to me, something of the sublime."

"I cannot imitate them—and they were not poets," said Cesarini, sharply. "To poets, praise is a necessary aliment; neglect is death."

"My dear Signor Cesarini," said the Englishman, feelingly, "do not give way to these thoughts. There ought to be in a healthful ambition the stubborn stuff of persevering longevity; it must live on, and hope for the day which comes slow or fast, to all whose labors deserve the goal."

"But perhaps mine do not. I sometimes fear so—it is a horrid thought."

"You are very young yet," said Maltravers; "how few at your age ever sicken for fame ! That first step is, perhaps, the half way to the prize."

I am not sure that Ernest thought exactly as he spoke; but it was the most delicate consolation to offer to a man whose abrupt frankness embarrassed and distressed him. The young man shook his head despondingly. Maltravers tried to change the subject—he rose and moved to the balcony, which overhung the lake—he talked of the weather—he dwelt on the exquiste scenery—he pointed to

* Sir Philip Sidney

the minute and more latent beauties around, with the eye and taste of one who had looked at Nature in her details. The poet grew more animated and cheerful; he became even eloquent; he quoted poetry and he talked it. Maltravers was more and more interested in him. He felt a curiosity to know if his talents equalled his aspirations: he hinted to Cesarini his wish to see his compositions—it was just what the young man desired. Poor Cesarini! It was much to him to get a new listener, and he fondly imagined every honest listener must be a warm admirer. But with the coyness of his caste, he affected reluctance and hesitation; he dallied with his own impatient yearnings. And Maltravers to smooth his way, proposed an excursion on the lake.

"One of my men shall row," said he; "you shall recite to me, and I will be to you what the old housekeeper was to Molière."

Maltravers had deep good-nature where he was touched, though he had not a superfluity of what is called good-humor, which floats on the surface and smiles on all alike. He had much of the milk of human kindness, but little of its oil.

The poet assented, and they were soon upon the lake. It was a sultry day, and it was noon; so the boat crept slowly along by the shadow of the shore, and Cesarini drew from his breast-pocket some manuscripts of small and beautiful writing. Who does not know the pains a young poet takes to bestow a fair dress on his darling rhymes!

Cesarini read well and feelingly. Everything was in favor of the reader. His own poetical countenance—his voice, his enthusiasm, half-suppressed—the pre-engaged interest of the auditor—the dreamy loveliness of the hour and scene—(for there is a great deal as to time in these things!) Maltravers listened intently. It is very difficult to judge of the exact merit of poetry in another language, even when we know that language well—so much is there in the untranslatable magic of expression, the little subtleties of style. But Maltravers, fresh, as he himself had said, from the study of great and original writers, could not but feel that he was listening to feeble though melodious mediocrity. It was the poetry of words, not things. He thought it cruel, however, to be hypercritical, and he uttered all the commonplaces of eulogium that occurred to him. The young man was enchanted: "And yet," said he, with a sigh, "I have no Public. In England they would appreciate me." Alas! in England, at that moment, there were five hundred poets as young, as ardent, and yet more gifted, whose hearts beat with the same desire—whose nerves were broken by the same disappointments.

Maltravers found that his young friend would not listen to any judgment not purely favorable. The archbishop in Gil Blas was not more touchy upon any criticism that was not panegyric. Maltravers thought it a bad sign, but he recollected Gil Blas, and prudently refrained from bringing on himself the benevolent wish of "beaucoup de bonheur et un peu plus de bon goût." When Cesarini had finished his MS., he was anxious to conclude the excursion—he longed to be at home, and think over the admiration he had excited. But he left his poems with Maltravers, and getting on shore by the remains of Pliny's villa, was soon out of sight.

Maltravers that evening read the poems with attention. His first opinion was confirmed. The young man wrote without knowledge. He had never felt the passions he painted, never been in the situations he described. There was no originality in him, for there was no experience: it was exquisite mechanism, his verse,—nothing more! It might well deceive him, for it could not but flatter his ear—and Tasso's silver march rang not more musically than did the chiming stanzas of Castruccio Cesarini.

The perusal of this poetry and his conversation with the poet, threw Maltravers into a fit of deep musing. "This poor Cesarini may warn me against myself!" thought he. "Better hew wood and draw water, than attach ourselves devotedly to an art in which we have not the capacity to excel. . . . It is to throw away the healthful objects of life for a diseased dream,—worse than the Rosicrucians, it is to make a sacrifice of all human beauty for the smile of a sylphid, that never visits us but in visions." Maltravers looked over his own compositions, and thrust them into the fire. He slept ill that night. His pride was a little dejected. He was like a beauty who has seen a caricature of herself.

CHAPTER III.

Still follow SENSE, of every art the Soul."
—POPE: *Moral Essays*—Essay iv.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS spent much of his time with the family of De Montaigne. There is no period of life in which we are more accessible to the sentiment of friendship, than in the intervals of moral exhaustion which succeed to the disappointments of the passions. There is, then, something, inviting in those gentler feelings which keep alive, but do not rever, the circulation of the affections. Maltravers looked with the benevolence of a brother upon the brilliant, versatile, and restless Teresa. She was the last person in the world he could have been in love with—for his nature, ardent, excitable, yet fastidious, required something of repose in the manners and temperament of the woman whom he could love, and Teresa scarcely knew what repose was. Whether playing with her children (and she had two lovely ones—the eldest six years old), or teasing her calm and meditative husband, or pouring out extempore verses, or rattling over airs which she never finished, on the guitar or piano—or making excursions on the lake—or, in short, in whatever occupation she appeared as the Cynthia of the minute, she was always gay and mobile,—never out of humor, never acknowledging a single care or cross in life,—never susceptible of grief, save when her brother's delicate health or morbid temper saddened her atmosphere of sunshine. Even then, the sanguine elasticity of her mind and constitution quickly recovered from the depression; and she persuaded herself that Castruccio would grow stronger every year, and ripen into a celebrated and happy man. Castruccio himself lived what romantic poetasters call "the life of a poet." He loved to see the sun rise over the distant Alps—or the midnight moon sleeping on the lake. He spent half the day, and often half the night, in solitary rambles, weaving his airy rhymes, or indulging his gloomy reveries, and he thought loneliness made the element of a poet. Alas! Dante, Alfieri, even Petrarch, might have taught him, that a poet must have intimate knowledge of men as well as mountains, if he desire to become the CREATOR. When Shelley, in one of his prefaces, boasts of being familiar with Alps and glaciers, and Heaven knows what, the critical artist cannot help wishing that he had been rather familiar with Fleet Street or the Strand. Perhaps, then, that remarkable genius might have been more capable of realizing characters of flesh and blood, and have composed corporeal and consummate wholes, not confused and glittering fragments.

Though Ernest was attached to Teresa and deeply interested in Castruccio, it was De Montaigne for whom he experienced the higher and graver sentiment of esteem. This Frenchman was one acquainted with a much larger world than that of the Coteries. He had served in the army, been employed with distinction in civil affairs, and was of that robust and healthful moral constitution which can bear with every variety of social life, and estimate calmly the balance of our mortal fortunes. Trial and experience had left him that true philosopher who is too wise to be an optimist, too just to be a misanthrope. He enjoyed life with sober judgment, and pursued the path most suited to himself, without declaring it to be the best for others. He was a little hard, perhaps, upon the errors that belong to weakness and conceit—not to those that have their source in great natures or generous thoughts. Among his characteristics was a profound admiration for England. His own country he half loved, yet half disdained. The impetuosity and levity of his compatriots displeased his sober and dignified notions. He could not forgive them (he was wont to say) for having made the two grand experiments of popular revolution and military despotism in vain. He sympathized neither with the young enthusiasts who desired a republic, without well knowing the numerous strata of habits and customs upon which that fabric, if designed for permanence, should be built—nor with the uneducated and fierce chivalry that longed for a restoration of the warrior empire—nor with the dull and arrogant bigots who connected all ideas of order and government with the ill-starred and worn-out dynasty of the Bourbons. In fact, GOOD SENSE was with him the *principium et fons* of all theories and all practice. And it was this quality that attached him to the English. His philosophy on this head was rather curious.

"Good sense," said he one day to Maltrav

ers, as they were walking to and fro at De Montaigne's villa, by the margin of the lake, "is not a merely intellectual attribute. It is rather the result of a just equilibrium of all our faculties, spiritual and moral. The dishonest, or the toys of their own passions, may have genius; but they rarely, if ever, have good sense in the conduct of life. They may often win large prizes, but it is by a game of chance, not skill. But the man whom I perceive walking an honorable and upright career—just to others, and also to himself—(for we owe justice to ourselves—to the care of our fortunes, our character—to the management of our passions)—is a more dignified representative of his Maker than the mere child of genius. Of such a man, we say he has GOOD SENSE; yes, but he has also integrity, self-respect, and self-denial. A thousand trials which his sense braves and conquers, are temptations also to his probity—his temper—in a word, to all the many sides of his complicated nature. Now, I do not think he will have this *good sense* any more than a drunkard will have strong nerves, unless he be in the constant habit of keeping his mind clear from the intoxication of envy, vanity, and the various emotions that dupe and mislead us.

"Good sense is not, therefore, an abstract quality or a solitary talent; but it is the natural result of the habit of thinking justly, and therefore seeing clearly, and is as different from the sagacity that belongs to a diplomatist or attorney, as the philosophy of Socrates differed from the rhetoric of Gorgias. As a mass of individual excellences make up this attribute in a man, so a mass of such men thus characterized give a character to a nation. Your England is, therefore, renowned for its good sense; but it is renowned also for the excellences which accompany strong sense in an individual, high honesty and faith in its dealings, a warm love of justice and fair play, a general freedom from the violent crimes common on the Continent, and the energetic perseverance in enterprise once commenced, which results from a bold and healthful disposition."

"Our Wars—our Debt"—began Maltravers.

"Pardon me," interrupted De Montaigne, "I am speaking of your People, not of your Government. A government is often a very unfair representative of a nation. But even in the wars you allude to, if you examine, you will generally find them originate in the love of justice (which is the basis of good sense), not from any insane desire of conquest or glory. A man, however sensible, must have a heart in his bosom, and a great nation cannot be a piece of selfish clockwork. Suppose you and I are sensible, prudent men, and we see in a crowd one violent fellow unjustly knocking another on the head, we should be brutes, not men, if we did not interfere with the savage; but if we thrust ourselves into a crowd with a large bludgeon, and belabor our neighbors, with the hope that the spectators would cry, 'See what a bold, strong fellow that is!'—then we should be only playing the madman from the motive of the coxcomb. I fear you will find, in the military history of the French and English, the application of my parable."

"Yet still, I confess, there is a gallantry, and a nobleman-like and Norman spirit in the whole French nation, which make me forgive many of their excesses, and think they are destined for great purposes, when experience shall have sobered their hot blood. Some nations, as some men, are slow in arriving at maturity; others seem men in their cradle. The English, thanks to their sturdy Saxon origin, elevated, not depressed, by the Norman infusion, never were children. The difference is striking, when you regard the representatives of both in their great men—whether writers or active citizens."

"Yes," said De Montaigne, "in Milton and Cromwell, there is nothing of the brilliant child. I cannot say as much for Voltaire or Napoleon. Even Richelieu, the manliest of our statesmen, had so much of the French infant in him as to fancy himself a *beau garçon*, a gallant, a wit, and a poet. As for the Racine school of writers, they were not out of the leading-strings of imitation—cold copyists of a pseudo-classic—in which they saw the form, and never caught the spirit. What so little Roman, Greek, Hebrew, as their Roman, Greek, and Hebrew dramas! Your rude Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar—even his Troilus and Cressida—have the ancient spirit, precisely as they are imitations of nothing ancient. But our Frenchmen copied the giant images of old, just as a school-girl copies a drawing, by holding it up to the window, and tracing the lines on silver paper."

"But your new writers—De Staël—Chateaubriand?" *

"I find no other fault with the sentimentalists," answered the severe critic, "than that of exceeding feebleness—they have no bone and muscle in their genius—all is flaccid and rotund in its feminine symmetry. They seem to think that vigor consists in florid phrases and little aphorisms, and delineate all the mighty tempests of the human heart with the polished prettiness of a minature-painter on ivory. No!—these two are children of another kind — affected, tricked-out, well-dressed children—very clever, very precocious —but children still. Their whinings, and their sentimentalities, and their egotism, and their vanity, cannot interest masculine beings who know what life and its stern objects are."

"Your brother-in-law," said Maltravers, with a slight smile, "must find in you a discouraging censor."

"My poor Castruccio," replied De Montaigne, with a half-sigh; "he is one of those victims whom I believe to be more common than we dream of—men whose aspirations are above their powers. I agree with a great German writer, that in the first walks of Art no man has a right to enter, unless he is convinced that he has strength and speed for the goal. Castruccio might be an amiable member of society, nay, an able and useful man, if he would apply the powers he possesses to the rewards they may obtain. He has talent enough to win him reputation in any profession but that of a poet."

"But authors who obtain immortality are not always first-rate."

"First-rate in their way, I suspect; even if that way be false or trivial. They must be connected with the *history* of their literature; you must be able to say of them, 'In this school, be it bad or good, they exerted such and such an influence;' in a word, they must form a link in the great chain of a nation's authors, which may be afterwards forgotten by the superficial, but without which the chain would be incomplete. And thus, if not first-rate for all time, they have been first-rate in their own day. But Castruccio is only the echo of others—he can neither found a school nor ruin one. Yet this," (again added De Montaigne after a pause)—"this melancholy malady in my brother-in-law would cure itself, perhaps, if he were not Italian. In your animated and bustling country, after sufficient disappointment as a poet, he would glide into some other calling, and his vanity and craving for effect would find a rational and manly outlet. But in Italy, what can a clever man do, if he is not a poet or a robber? If he love his country, that crime is enough to unfit him for civil employment, and his mind cannot stir a step in the bold channels of speculation without falling foul of the Austrian or Pope. No; the best I can hope for Castruccio is, that he will end in an antiquary, and dispute about ruins with the Romans. Better that than mediocre poetry."

Maltravers was silent and thoughtful. Strange to say, De Montaigne's views did not discourage his own new and secret ardor for intellectual triumphs; not because he felt that he was now able to achieve them, but because he felt the iron of his own nature, and knew that a man who *has* iron in his nature must ultimately hit upon some way of shaping the metal into use.

The host and guest were now joined by Castruccio himself—silent and gloomy as indeed he usually was, especially in the presence of De Montaigne, with whom he felt his "self-love" wounded; for though he longed to despise his hard brother-in-law, the young poet was compelled to acknowledge that De Montaigne was not a man to be despised.

Maltravers dined with the De Montaignes, and spent the evening with them. He could not but observe that Castruccio, who affected in his verses the softest sentiments—who was indeed, by original nature, tender and gentle —had become so completely warped by that worst of all mental vices—the eternally pondering on his own excellencies, talents, mortifications, and ill-usage, that he never contributed to the gratification of those around him; he had none of the little arts of social benevolence, none of the playful youth of disposition which usually belongs to the good-hearted, and for which men of a master-genius, however elevated their studies, however stern or reserved to the vulgar world, are commonly

* At the time of this conversation, the later school, adorned by Victor Hugo, who, with notions of Art elaborately wrong, is still a man of extraordinary genius, had not risen into its present equivocal reputation.

noticeable amidst the friends they love, or in the home they adorn. Occupied with one dream, centered in self, the young Italian was sullen and morose to all who did not sympathize with his own morbid fancies. From the children—the sister—the friend—the whole living earth, he fled to a poem on Solitude, or stanzas upon Fame. Maltravers said to himself, "I will never be an author—I will never sigh for renown—if I am to purchase shadows at such a price!"

CHAPTER IV.

"It cannot be too deeply impressed on the mind, that application is the price to be paid for mental acquisitions, and that it is as absurd to expect them without it, as to hope for a harvest where we have not sown the seed."

"In everything we do, we may be possibly laying a train of consequences, the operation of which may terminate only with our existence."

—BAILEY: *Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions.*

TIME passed and autumn was far advanced towards winter, still Maltravers lingered at Como. He saw little of any other family than that of the De Montaignes, and the greater part of his time was necessarily spent alone. His occupation continued to be that of making experiments of his own powers, and these gradually became bolder and more comprehensive. He took care, however, not to show his "Diversions of Como" to his new friends; he wanted no audience—he dreamt of no Public; he desired merely to practise his own mind. He became aware, of his own accord, as he proceeded, that a man can neither study with much depth, nor compose with much art, unless he has some definite object before him; in the first, some one branch of knowledge to master; in the last, some one conception to work out. Maltravers fell back upon his boyish passion for metaphysical speculation; but with what different results did he now wrestle with the subtle schoolmen,—now that he had practically known mankind! How insensibly new lights broke in upon him, as he threaded the labyrinth of cause and effect, by which we seek to arrive at that curious and biform monster—our own nature. His mind became saturated, as it were, with these profound studies and meditations; and when at length he paused from them, he felt as if he had not been living in solitude, but had gone through a process of action in the busy world: so much juster, so much clearer, had become his knowledge of himself and others.

But though these researches colored, they did not limit his intellectual pursuits. Poetry and the lighter letters became to him, not merely a relaxation, but a critical and thoughtful study. He delighted to penetrate into the causes that have made the airy webs spun by men's fancies so permament and powerful in their influence over the hard, work-day world. And what a lovely scene—what a sky—what an air wherein to commence the projects of that ambition which seeks to establish an empire in the hearts and memories of mankind! I believe it has a great effect on the future labors of a writer,—the place where he first dreams that it is his destiny to write!

From these pursuits, Ernest was aroused by another letter from Cleveland. His kind friend had been disappointed and vexed that Maltravers did not follow his advice, and return to England. He had shown his displeasure by not answering Ernest's letter of excuses; but lately he had been seized with a dangerous illness which reduced him to the brink of the grave; and with a heart softened by the exhaustion of the frame, he now wrote in the first moments of convalescence to Maltravers, informing him of his attack and danger, and once more urging him to return. The thought that Cleveland—the dear, kind, gentle guardian of his youth—had been near unto death, that he might never more have hung upon that fostering hand, nor replied to that paternal voice, smote Ernest with terror and remorse. He resolved instantly to return to England, and made his preparations accordingly.

He went to take leave of the De Montaignes. Teresa was trying to teach her first-born to read;—and, seated by the open window of the villa, in her neat, not precise, dishabille—with the little boy's delicate, yet bold and healthy countenance looking up fearlessly at hers, while she was endeavoring to initiate him—half gravely, half laughingly—into the mysteries of monosyllables, the pretty boy and the fair young mother made a delightful picture. De Montaigne was reading the Essays of his celebrated namesake, in whom he boasted, I

know not with what justice, to claim an ancestor. From time to time he looked from the page to take a glance at the progress of his heir, and keep up with the march of intellect. But he did not interfere with the maternal lecture; he was wise enough to know that there is a kind of sympathy between a child and a mother, which is worth all the grave superiority of a father in making learning palatable to young years. He was far too clever a man not to despise all the systems for forcing infants under knowledge-frames, which are the present fashion. He knew that philosophers never made a greater mistake than in insisting so much upon beginning abstract education from the cradle. It is quite enough to attend to an infant's temper, and correct that cursed predilection for telling fibs which falsifies all Dr. Reid's absurd theory about innate propensities to truth, and makes the prevailing epidemic of the nursery. Above all, what advantage ever compensates for hurting a child's health or breaking his spirit? Never let him learn, more than you can help it, the crushing bitterness of fear. A bold child who looks you in the face, speaks the truth and shames the devil; that is the stuff of which to make good and brave—ay, and wise men!

Maltravers entered unannounced, into this charming family party, and stood unobserved for a few moments, by the open door. The little pupil was the first to perceive him, and, forgetful of monosyllables, ran to greet him; for, Maltravers, though gentle rather than gay, was a favorite with children, and his fair, calm, gracious countenance did more for him with them, than if, like Goldsmith's Burchell, his pockets had been filled with gingerbread and apples. "Ah, fie on you, Mr. Maltravers!" cried Teresa, rising, "you have blown away all the characters I have been endeavoring this last half hour to imprint upon sand."

"Not so, Signora," said Maltravers, seating himself, and placing the child on his knee; my young friend will set to work again with a greater gusto after this little break in upon his labors."

"You will stay with us all day, I hope?" said De Montaigne.

"Indeed," said Maltravers, I am come to ask permission to do so, for to-morrow I depart for England."

"Is it possible?" cried Teresa. How sudden! How we shall miss you! Oh! don't go. But perhaps you have had bad news from England."

"I have news that summons me hence," replied Maltravers; "my guardian and second father has been dangerously ill. I am uneasy about him, and reproach myself for having forgotten him so long in your seductive society."

"I am really sorry to lose you," said De Montaigne, with greater warmth in his tones than in his words. "I hope heartily we shall meet again soon: you will come, perhaps, to Paris?"

"Probably," said Maltravers; "and you, perhaps, to England?"

"Ah, how I should like it!" exclaimed Teresa.

"No, you would not," said her husband, "you would not like England at all; you would call it *triste* beyond measure. It is one of those countries of which a native should be proud, but which has no amusement for a stranger, precisely because full of such serious and stirring occupations to the citizens. The pleasantest countries for strangers are the worst countries for natives, (witness Italy), and *vice versâ*."

Teresa shook her dark curls, and would not be convinced.

"And where is Castruccio?" asked Maltravers.

"In his boat on the lake," replied Teresa. He will be inconsolable at your departure: you are the only person he can understand, or who understands him; the only person in Italy—I had almost said in the whole world."

"Well, we shall meet at dinner," said Ernest; "meanwhile, let me prevail on you to accompany me to the *Pliniana*. I wish to say farewell to that crystal spring."

Teresa, delighted at any excursion, readily consented.

"And I too, mamma," cried the child; "and my little sister?"

"Oh, certainly," said Maltravers, speaking for the parents.

So the party was soon ready, and they pushed off in the clear, genial noon-tide (for November in Italy is as early as September in the North), across the sparkling and dimpled waters. The children prattled, and the grown-up people talked on a thousand matters. It was a pleasant day, that last day at Como'

For the farewells of friendship have indeed something of the melancholy, but not the anguish, of those of love. Perhaps it would be better if we could get rid of love altogether. Life would go on smoother and happier without it. Friendship is the wine of existence, but love is the dram-drinking.

When they returned, they found Castruccio seated on the lawn. He did not appear so much dejected at the prospect of Ernest's departure as Teresa had anticipated; for Castruccio Cesarini was a very jealous man, and he had lately been chagrined and discontented with seeing the delight that the De Montaignes took in Ernest's society.

"Why is this?" he often asked himself; "why are they more pleased with this stranger's society than mine? My ideas are as fresh, as original; I have as much genius, yet even my dry brother-in-law allows *his* talents, and predicts that *he* will be an eminent man; while *I* —No!—one is not a prophet in one's own country!"

Unhappy young man! his mind bore all the rank weeds of the morbid poetical character, and the weeds choked up the flowers that the soil, properly cultivated, should alone bear. Yet that crisis in life awaited Castruccio, in which a sensitive and poetical man is made or marred;—the crisis in which a sentiment is replaced by the passions in which love for some real object gathers the scattered rays of the heart into a focus; out of that ordeal he might pass a purer and manlier being —so Maltravers often hoped. Maltravers then little thought how closely connected with his own fate was to be that passage in the history of the Italian! Castruccio contrived to take Maltravers aside, and as he led the Englishman through the wood that backed the mansion, he said, with some embarrassment, "You go, I suppose, to London?"

"I shall pass through it—can I execute any commission for you?"

"Why, yes; my poems!—I think of publishing them in England: your aristocracy cultivate the Italian letters; and, perhaps, I may be read by the fair and noble—*that* is the proper audience of poets. For the vulgar herd —I disdain it!"

"My dear Castruccio, I will undertake to see your poems published in London, if you wish it; but do not be sanguine. In England we read little poetry, even in our own language, and we are shamefully indifferent to foreign literature."

"Yes, foreign literature generally, and you are right; but *my* poems are of another kind. They must command attention in a polished and intelligent circle."

"Well! let the experiment be tried; you can let me have the poems when we part."

"I thank you," said Castruccio, in a joyous tone, pressing his friend's hand; and for the rest of that evening, he seemed an altered being; he even caressed the children, and did not sneer at the grave conversation of his brother-in-law.

When Maltravers rose to depart, Castruccio gave him the packet; and then, utterly engrossed with his own imagined futurity of fame, vanished from the room to indulge his reveries. He cared no longer for Maltravers —he had put him to use—he could not be sorry for his departure, for that departure was the Avatar of His appearance to a new world!

A small dull rain was falling, though, at intervals, the stars broke through the unsettled clouds, and Teresa did not therefore venture from the house; she presented her smooth cheek to the young guest to salute, pressed him by the hand, and bade him adieu with tears in her eyes. "Ah!" said she, "when we meet again, I hope you will be married—I shall love your wife dearly. There is no happiness like marriage and home!" and she looked with ingenuous tenderness at De Montaigne.

Maltravers sighed—his thoughts flew back to Alice. Where now was that lone and friendless girl, whose innocent love had once brightened a home for *him?* He answered by a vague and mechanical commonplace, and quitted the room with De Montaigne, who insisted on seeing him depart. As they neared the lake, De Montaigne broke the silence.

"My dear Maltravers," he said, with a serious and thoughtful affection in his voice, "we may not meet again for years. I have a warm interest in your happiness and career—yes, *career*, —I repeat the word. I do not habitually seek to inspire young men with ambition. Enough for most of them to be good and honorable citizens. But in your case it is different. I see in you the earnest and meditative, not rash and overweening youth, which is usually productive of a distinguished manhood. Your

mind is not yet settled, it is true; but it is fast becoming clear and mellow from the first ferment of boyish dreams and passions. You have everything in your favor, competence, birth, connections; and, above all, you are an Englishman! You have a mighty stage, on which, it is true, you cannot establish a footing without merit and without labor—so much the better; in which strong and resolute rivals will urge you on to emulation, and then competition will task your keenest powers."

"Think what a glorious fate it is, to have an influence on the vast, but ever-growing mind of such a country,—to feel, when you retire from the busy scene, that you have played an unforgotten part—that you have been the medium, under God's great will, of circulating new ideas throughout the world—of upholding the glorious priesthood of the Honest and the Beautiful. This is the true ambition; the desire of mere personal notoriety is vanity, not ambition. Do not then be lukewarm or supine. The trait I have observed in you," added the Frenchman, with a smile, "most prejudicial to your chances of distinction is, that you are *too* philosophical, too apt to *cui bono* all the exertions that interfere with the indolence of cultivated leisure. And you must not suppose, Maltravers, that an active career will be a path of roses. At present you have no enemies; but the moment you attempt distinction, you will be abused, calumniated, reviled. You will be shocked at the wrath you excite, and sigh for your old obscurity, and consider, as Franklin has it, that 'you have paid too dear for your whistle.' But, in return for individual enemies, what a noble recompense to have made the Public itself your friend; perhaps even Posterity your familiar! Besides," added De Montaigne, with almost a religious solemnity in his voice, "there is a conscience of the head as well as of the heart, and in old age we feel as much remorse, if we have wasted our natural talents, as if we have perverted our natural virtues. The profound and exultant satisfaction with which a man who knows that he has not lived in vain—that he has entailed on the world an heir-loom of instruction or delight—looks back upon departed struggles, is one of the happiest emotions of which the conscience can be capable.

"What, indeed are the petty faults we commit as individuals, affecting but a narrow circle, ceasing with our own lives, to the incalculable and everlasting good we may produce as public men by one book or by one law? Depend upon it that the Almighty, who sums up all the good and all the evil done by his creatures in a just balance, will not judge the august benefactors of the world with the same severity as those drones of soeiety, who have no great services to show in the eternal ledger, as a set-off to the indulgence of their small vices. These things rightly considered, Maltravers, you will have every inducement that can tempt a lofty mind and a pure ambition to awaken from the voluptuous indolence of the literary Sybarite, and contend worthily in the world's wide Altis for a great prize."

Maltravers never before felt so flattered—so stirred into high resolves. The stately eloquence, the fervid encouragement of this man, usually so cold and fastidious, roused him like the sound of a trumpet. He stopped short, his breath heaved thick, his cheek flushed. "De Montaigne," said he, "your words have cleared away a thousand doubts and scruples—they have gone right to my heart. For the first time I understand what fame is—what the object, and what the reward of labor! Visions, hopes, aspirations, I may have had before—for months a new spirit has been fluttering within me. I have felt the wings breaking from the shell. But all was confused, dim, uncertain. I doubted the wisdom of effort, with life so short, and the pleasures of youth so sweet. I now look no longer on life but as a part of the eternity to which I *feel* we were born; and I recognize the solemn truth that our objects, to be worthy life, should be worthy of creatures in whom the living principle never is extinct. Farewell! come joy or sorrow, failure or success, I will struggle to deserve your friendship."

Maltravers sprang into his boat, and the shades of night soon snatched him from the lingering gaze of De Montaigne.

BOOK FOURTH.

* * * ἀτὶ δὶ ξένας
Ναίεις χθονὶ, τᾶς ἀνάνδρου
Κοίτας ὀλέσασα λέκτρον
Τάλαινα.

EURIP. *Med.* 441.

"Strange is the land that holds thee,—and thy couch
Is widow'd of the loved one."—*Translation.*

CHAPTER I.

"I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years;
And so my lot was ordered, that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope."
—CENCI.

FROM accompanying Maltravers along the noiseless progress of mental education, we are now called awhile to cast our glances back at the ruder and harsher ordeal which Alice Darvil was ordained to pass. Along her path poetry shed no flowers, nor were her lonely steps towards the distant shrine at which her pilgrimage found its rest lighted by the mystic lamp of science, or guided by the thousand stars which are never dim in the heavens for those favored eyes from which genius and fancy have removed many of the films of clay. Not along the aërial and exalted ways that wind far above the homes and business of common men—the solitary Alps of Spiritual Philosophy—wandered the desolate steps of the child of poverty and sorrow. On the beaten and rugged highways of common life, with a weary heart, and with bleeding feet, she went her melancholy course. But the goal which is the great secret of life, the *summum arcanum* of all philosophy, whether the Practical or the Ideal, was, perhaps, no less attainable for that humble girl than for the elastic step and aspiring heart of him who thirsted after the Great, and almost believed in the Impossible.

We return to that dismal night in which Alice was torn from the roof of her lover.—It was long before she recovered her consciousness of what had passed, and gained a full perception of the fearful revolution which had taken place in her destinies. It was then a gray and dreary morning twilight; and the rude but covered vehicle which bore her was rolling along the deeps ruts of an unfrequented road, winding among the unenclosed and mountainous wastes that, in England, usually betoken the neighborhood of the sea. With a shudder Alice looked round: Walters, her father's accomplice, lay extended at her feet, and his heavy breathing showed that he was fast asleep. Darvil himself was urging on the jaded and sorry horse, and his broad back was turned towards Alice; the rain, from which, in his position, he was but ill protected by the awning, dripped dismally from his slouched hat; and now, as he turned around, and his sinister and gloomy gaze rested upon the face of Alice, his bad countenance, rendered more haggard by the cold raw light of the cheerless dawn, completed the hideous picture of unveiled and ruffianly wretchedness.

"Ho, ho! Alley, so you are come to your senses," said he, with a kind of joyless grin. "I am glad of it, for I can have no fainting fine ladies with me. You have had a long holiday, Alley; you must now learn once more to work for your poor father. Ah, you have been d——d sly; but never mind the past—I forgive it. You must not run away again without my leave; if you are fond of

sweethearts, I won't balk you—but your old father must go shares, Alley."

Alice could hear no more: she covered her face with the cloak that had been thrown about her, and though she did not faint, her senses seemed to be locked and paralyzed. By and by Walters woke, and the two men, heedless of her presence, conversed upon their plans. By degrees she recovered sufficient self-possession to listen, in the instinctive hope that some plan of escape might be suggested to her. But from what she could gather of the incoherent and various projects they discussed, one after another — disputing upon each with frightful oaths and scarce intelligible slang, she could only learn that it was resolved at all events to leave the district in which they were—but whither, seemed yet all undecided. The cart halted at last at a miserable-looking hut, which the sign-post announced to be an inn that afforded good accomodation to travellers; to which announcement was annexed the following epigrammatic distich:—

"Old Tom, he is the best of gin;
Drink him once, and you'll drink him *agin!*"

The hovel stood so remote from all other habitations, and the waste around was so bare of trees, and even shrubs, that Alice saw with despair that all hope of flight in such a place would be indeed a chimera. But to make assurance doubly sure, Darvil himself, lifting her from the cart, conducted her up a broken and unlighted staircase, into a sort of loft rather than a room, and pushing her rudely in, turned the key upon her, and descended. The weather was cold, the livid damps hung upon the distained walls, and there was neither fire nor hearth; but thinly clad as she was—her cloak and shawl her principal covering—she did not feel the cold; for her heart was more chilly than the airs of heaven. At noon an old woman brought her some food, which, consisting of fish and poached game, was better than might have been expected in such a place, and what would have been deemed a feast under her father's roof. With an inviting leer, the crone pointed to a pewter measure of raw spirits that accompanied the viands. and assured her, in a cracked and maudlin voice, that "'Old Tom' was a kinder friend than any of the young fellers!" This intrusion ended, Alice was again left alone till dusk, when Darvil entered with a bundle of clothes, such as are worn by the peasants of that primitive district of England.

"There, Alley," said he, "put on this warm toggery; finery won't do now. We must leave no scent in the track; the hounds are after us, my little blowen. Here's a nice stuff gown for you, and a red cloak that would frighten a turkey-cock. As to the other cloak and shawl, don't be afraid; they shan't go to the pop-shop, but we'll take care of them against we get to some large town where there are young fellows with blunt in their pockets; for you seem to have already found out that your face is your fortune, Alley. Come, make haste; we must be starting. I shall come up for you in ten minutes, Pish! don't be faint-hearted; here, take 'Old Tom'—take it, I say. What, you won't? Well, here's to your health, and a better taste to you!"

And now, as the door once more closed upon Darvil, tears for the first time came to the relief of Alice. It was a woman's weakness that procured for her that woman's luxury. Those garments—they were Ernest's gift—Ernest's taste; they were like the last relic of that delicious life which now seemed to have fled for ever. All trace of that life—of him, the loving, the protecting, the adored; all trace of herself, as she had been re-created by love, was to be lost to her for ever. It was (as she had read somewhere, in the little elementary volumes that bounded her historic lore) like that last fatal ceremony in which those condemned for life to the mines of Siberia are clothed with the slave's livery, their past name and record eternally blotted out, and thrust into the vast wastes, from which even the mercy of despotism, should it ever re-awaken, cannot recall them; for all evidence of them—all individuality—all mark to distinguish them from the universal herd, is expunged from the world's calendar. She was still sobbing in vehement and unrestrained passion, when Darvil re-entered. "What, not dressed yet?" he exclaimed, in a voice of impatient rage; "harkye, this won't do. If in two minutes you are not ready, I'll send up John Walters to help you; and he is a rough hand, I can tell you."

This threat recalled Alice to herself. "I will do as you wish," said she, meekly.

"Well, then, be quick," said Darvil; "they

are now putting the horse to. And mark me, girl, your father is running away from the gallows, and that thought does not make a man stand upon scruples. If you once attempt to give me the slip, or do or say anything that can bring the bulkies upon us—by the devil in hell—if, indeed, there be hell or devil—my knife shall become better acquainted with that throat—so look to it!"

And this was the father—this the condition—of her whose ear had for months drunk no other sound than the whispers of flattering love—the murmurs of Passion from the lips of Poetry.

They continued their journey till midnight; they then arrived at an inn, little different from the last; but here Alice was no longer consigned to solitude. In a long room, reeking with smoke, sate from twenty to thirty ruffians before a table, on which mugs and vessels of strong potations were formidably interspersed with sabres and pistols. They received Walters and Darvil with a shouts of welcome, and would have crowded somewhat unceremoniously round Alice, if her father, whose well-known desperate and brutal ferocity made him a man to be respected in such an assembly, had not said, sternly, "Hands off, messmates, and make way by the fire for my little girl—she is meat for your masters."

So saying, he pushed Alice down into a huge chair in the chimney nook, and, seating himself near her, at the end of the table, hastened to turn the conversation.

"Well, captain," said he addressing a small thin man at the head of the table, "I and Walters have fairly cut and run—the land has a bad air for us, and we now want the sea-breeze to cure the rope fever. So, knowing this was your night, we have crowded sail, and here we are. You must give the girl there a lift, though I know you don't like such lumber, and we'll run ashore as soon as we can."

"She seems a quiet little body," replied the captain; "and we would do more than that to oblige an old friend like you. In half-an-hour Oliver* put on his night-cap, and we must then be off."

"The sooner the better."

The men now appeared to forget the presence of Alice, who sat faint with fatigue and exhaustion, for she had been too sick at heart to touch the food brought to her at their previous halting-place, gazing abstractedly at the fire. Her father, before their departure, made her swallow some morsels of sea-biscuit, though each seemed to choke her; and then wrapped in a thick boat-cloak, she was placed in a small well-built cutter, and as the sea winds whistled round her, the present cold and the past fatigues lulled her miserable heart into the arms of the charitable Sleep.

* The moon,

CHAPTER II.

"You are once more a free woman;
Here I discharge your bonds."
—*The Custom of the Country.*

And many were thy trials, poor child; many that, were this book to germinate into volumes, more numerous than monk ever composed upon the lives of saint or martyr, (though a hundred volumes contained the record of two years only in the life of St. Anthony), it would be impossible to describe! We may talk of the fidelity of books, but no man ever wrote even his own biography, without being compelled to omit at least nine tenths of the most important materials. What are three—what six volumes? We live six volumes in a day! Thought, emotion, joy, sorrow, hope, fear, how prolix would they be, if they might each tell their hourly tale! But man's life itself is a brief epitome of that which is infinite and everlasting; and his most accurate confessions are a miserable abridgment of a hurried and confused compendium!

It was about three months, or more, from the night in which Alice wept herself to sleep amongst those wild companions, when she contrived to escape from her father's vigilant eye. They were then on the coast of Ireland. Darvil had separated himself from Walters—from his seafaring companions; he had run through the greater part of the money his crimes had got together; he began seriously to attempt putting into excution his horrible design of depending for support upon the sale of his daughter. Now Alice might have been moulded into sinful purposes, before she knew Maltravers; but from that hour her very error made her virtuous—she had comprehended,

the moment she loved, what was meant by female honor; and, by a sudden revelation, she had purchased modesty, delicacy of thought and soul, in the sacrifice of herself. Much of our morality, (prudent and right npon system), with respect to the first false step of women, leads us, as we all know into barbarous errors, as to individual exceptions. Where, from pure and confiding love, that first false step has been taken, many a woman has been saved, in after-life, from a thousand temptations. The poor unfortunates, who crowd our streets and theatres, have rarely, in the first instance, been corrupted by love; but by poverty, and the contagion of circumstance and example. It is a miserable cant phrase to call them the victims of seduction; they have been the victims of hunger, of vanity, of curiosity, of evil *female* counsels; but the seduction of love hardly ever conducts to a *life* of vice. If a woman has once really loved, the beloved object makes an impenetrable barrier between her and the other men; their advances terrify and revolt—she would rather die than be unfaithful even to a memory. Though man loves the sex, woman loves only the individual; and the more she loves him, the more cold is she to the species. For the passion of woman is in the sentiment—the fancy—the heart. It rarely has much to do with the coarse images with which boys and old men—the inexperienced and the worn out—connect it.

But Alice, though her blood ran cold at her terrible father's language, saw in his very design the prospect of escape. In an hour of drunkenness he thrust her from the house, and stationed himself to watch her—it was in the city of Cork. She formed her resolution instantly—turned up a narrow street, and fled at full speed. Darvil endeavored in vain to keep pace wlth her—his eyes dizzy, his steps reeling with intoxication. She heard his last curse dying from a distance on the air, and her fear winged her steps; she paused at last, and found herself on the outskirts of the town:—She paused, overcome, and deadly faint; and then, for the first time, she felt that a strange and new life was stirring within her own. She had long since known that she bore in her womb the unborn offspring of Maltravers, and that knowledge still made her struggle and live on. But now, the embryo had quickened into being—it moved—it appealed to her—a thing unseen, unknown; but still it was a living creature appealing to a mother! Oh, the thrill, half of ineffable tenderness, half of mysterious terror, at that moment! What a new chapter in the life of woman did it not announce!—Now, then, she must be watchful over herself—must guard against fatigue—must wrestle with despair. Solemn was the trust committed to her—the life of another—the child of the Adored. It was a summer night—she sate on a rude stone, the city on one side, with its lights and lamps;—the whitened fields beyond, with the moon and the stars above: and *above* she raised her streaming eyes, and she thought that God, the Protector, smiled upon her from the face of the sweet skies. So, after a pause and a silent prayer she rose and resumed her way. When she was wearied she crept into a shed in a farmyard, and slept, for the first time for weeks, the calm sleep of security and hope.

CHAPTER III.

" How like a prodigal doth she return
With over-weathered ribs and ragged sails."
—*Merchant of Venice.*

" *Mer.* What are these?
Uncle. The tenants."
—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.—*Wit without Money.*

IT was just two years from the night in which Alice had been torn from the cottage; and, at that time, Maltravers was wandering amongst the ruins of ancient Egypt, when, upon the very lawn where Alice and her lover had so often loitered hand in hand, a gay party of children and young people were assembled. The cottage had been purchased by an opulent and retired manufacturer. He had raised the low thatched roof another story high—and blue slate had replaced the thatch—and the pretty verandahs overgrown with creepers had been taken down, because Mrs. Hobbs thought they gave the rooms a dull look; and the little rustic doorway had been replaced by four Ionic pillars in Stucco; and a new dining-room, twenty-two feet by eighteen, had been built out at one wing, and a new drawing room had been built over the new dining-room. And the poor little cottage looked quite grand and villa-like.

The fountain had been taken away, because it made the house damp; and there was such a broad carriage-drive from the gate to the house! The gate was no longer the modest green wooden gate, ever ajar with its easy latch; but a tall, cast-iron, well-locked gate, between two pillars to match the porch. And on one of the gates was a brass-plate, on which was graven, "Hobbs' Lodge—Ring the bell." The lesser Hobbses, and the bigger Hobbses were all on the lawn—many of them fresh from school—for it was the half-holyday of a Saturday afternoon. There was mirth, and noise, and shouting, and whooping, and the respectable old couple looked calmly on. Hobbs the father, smoking his pipe; (alas, it was not the dear meerschaum!) Hobbs the mother, talking to her eldest daughter, (a fine young woman, three months married, for love, to a poor man), upon the proper number of days that a leg of mutton (weight ten pounds) should be made to last. "Always, my dear, have large joints, they are much the most saving. Let me see—what a noise the boys do make! No, my love, the ball's not here."

"Mamma, it is under your petticoats."

"La, child, how naughty you are!"

"Holla, you sir! it's my turn to go in now. Biddy, wait,—girls have no innings—girls only fag out."

"Bob, you cheat."

"Pa, Ned says I cheat."

"Very likely, my dear, you are to be a lawyer."

"Where was I, my dear?" resumed Mrs. Hobbs, resettling herself, and readjusting the invaded petticoats. "Oh, about the leg of mutton!—yes, large joints are the best—the second day a nice hash, with dumplings; the third, broil the bone—your husband is sure to like broiled bones!—and then keep the scraps for Saturday's pie:—you know, my dear, your father and I were worse off than you when we began. But now we have everything that is handsome about us—nothing like management. Saturday pies are very nice things, and then you start clear with your joint on Sunday. A good wife like you should never neglect the Saturday's pie!"

"Yes," said the bride, mournfully; "but Mr. Tiddy does not like pies."

"Not like pies! that's very odd—Mr. Hobbs likes pies—perhaps you don't have the crust made thick eno'. Howsomever, you can make it up to him with a pudding. A wife should always study her husband's tastes—what is a man's home without love? Still a husband ought not to be aggravating, and dislike pie on a Saturday!"

"Holloa! I say ma; do you see that 'ere gipsy? I shall go and have my fortune told."

"And I—and I!"

"Lor, if there ben't a tramper?" cried Mr. Hobbs, rising indignantly; "what can the parish be about?"

The object of these latter remarks, filial and paternal, was a young woman in a worn, thread-bare cloak, with her face pressed to the open-work of the gate, and looking wistfully—oh, how wistfully!—within. The children eagerly ran up to her, but they involuntarily slackened their steps when they drew near, for she was evidently not what they had taken her for. No gipsy hues darkened the pale, thin, delicate cheek—no gipsy leer lurked in those large blue and streaming eyes—no gipsy effrontery bronzed that candid and childish brow. As she thus pressed her countenance with convulsive eagerness against the cold bars, the young people caught the contagion of inexpressible and half-fearful sadness—they approached almost respectfully—"Do you want anything here?" said the eldest and boldest of the boys.

"I—I—surely this is Dale Cottage?"

"It was Dale Cottage, it is Hobbs' Lodge now; can't you read?" said the pride of the Hobbs's honors, losing, in contempt at the girls ignorance, his first impression of sympathy.

"And—and—Mr. Butler, is he gone *too?*"

Poor child! she spoke as if the cottage was gone, not improved; the Ionic portico had no charm for her!

"Butler!—no such person lives here. Pa, do you know where Mr. Butler lives?"

Pa was now moving up to the place of conference the slow artillery of his fair round belly and portly calves. "Butler, no—I know nothing of such a name—no Mr. Butler lives here. Go along with you—ain't you ashamed to beg?"

"No Mr. Butler!" said the girl, gasping for breath, and clinging to the gate for support. "Are you sure, sir?"

"Sure, yes!—what do you want with him?"

"Oh, papa, she looks faint!" said one of the *girls*, deprecatingly—"do let her have something to eat, I'm sure she's hungry."

Mr. Hobbs looked angry; he had often been taken in, and no rich man likes beggars. Generally speaking, the rich man is in the right. But then Mr. Hobbs turned to the suspected tramper's sorrowful face and then to his fair pretty child—and his good angel whispered something to Mr. Hobb's heart—and he said, after a pause, "Heaven forbid that we should not feel for a poor fellow-creature not so well to do as ourselves! Come in, my lass, and have a morsel to eat."

The girl did not seem to hear him, and he repeated the invitation, approaching to unlock the gate.

"No, sir," said she, then; "no, I thank you. I could not come in now. I could not eat *here*. But tell me, sir, I implore you, can you not even guess where I may find Mr. Butler?"

"Butler!" said Mrs. Hobbs, whom curiosity had drawn to the spot. "I remember that was the name of the gentleman who hired the place, and was robbed."

"Robbed!" said Mr. Hobbs, falling back and relocking the gate—"and the new tea-pot just come home," he muttered inly,——"Come, be off, child—be off; we know nothing of your Mr. Butlers."

The young woman looked wildly in his face, cast a hurried glance over the altered spot, and then, with a kind of shiver, as if the wind had smitten her delicate form too rudely, she drew her cloak more closely round her shoulders, and without saying another word, moved away. The party looked after her as, with trembling steps, she passed down the road, and all felt that pang of shame which is common to the human heart, at the sight of a distress it has not sought to soothe. But this feeling vanished at once from the breast of Mrs. and Mr. Hobbs, when they saw the girl stop where a turn of the road brought the gate before her eyes; and for the first time they perceived, what the worn cloak had hitherto concealed, that the poor young thing bore an infant in her arms. She halted, she gazed fondly back. Even at that distance the despair of her eyes was visible; and then, as she pressed her lips to the infant's brow, they heard a convulsive sob—they saw her turn away, and she was gone!

"Well, I declare!" said Mrs. Hobbs.

"News for the parish," said Mr. Hobbs; "and she so young too!—what a shame!"

"The girls about here are very bad now-a-days, Jenny," said the mother to the bride.

"I see now why she wanted Mr. Butler," quoth Hobbs, with a knowing wink—"the slut has come to swear!"

And it was for this that Alice had supported her strength—her courage—during the sharp pangs of child-birth; during a severe and crushing illness, which for months after her confinement had stretched her upon a peasant's bed, (the object of the rude but kindly charity of an Irish shealing),—for this, day after day, she had whispered to herself, "I shall get well, and I will beg my way to the cottage, and find him there still, and put my little one into his arms, and all will be bright again;"—for this, as soon as she could walk without aid, had she set out on foot from the distant land;—for this, almost with a dog's instinct—(for she knew not what way to turn—what county the cottage was placed in; she only knew the name of the neighboring town; and that, populous as it was, sounded strange to the ears of those she asked; and she had often and often been directed wrong;)—for this, I say, almost with a dog's faithful instinct, had she, in cold and heat, in hunger and in thirst, tracked to her old master's home her desolate and lonely way!

And thrice had she over-fatigued herself—and thrice again been indebted to humble pity for a bed whereon to lay a feverish and broken frame. And once, too, her baby—her darling, her life of life, had been ill—had been near unto death, and she could not stir till the infant (it was a girl) was well again, and could smile in her face and crow. And thus many, many months had elapsed, since the day she set out on her pilgrimage, to that on which she found its goal. But never, save when the child was ill, had she desponded or abated heart and hope. She should see him again, and he would kiss her child. And now—no—I cannot paint the might of that stunning blow! She knew not, she dreamed not, of the kind precautions Maltravers had taken; and he had not sufficiently calculated on her thorough ignorance of the world. How could she divine that the magistrate, not a mile distant from her, could have told her all she

sought to know? Could she but have met the gardener—or the old woman-servant—all would have been well! These last, indeed, she had the forethought to ask for. But the woman was dead, and the gardener had taken a strange service in some distant county. And so died her last gleam of hope. If one person who remembered the search of Maltravers had but met and recognized her! But she had been seen by so few—and now the bright, fresh girl was so sadly altered! Her race was not yet run, and many a sharp wind upon the mournful seas had the bark to brave, before its haven was found at last.

CHAPTER IV.

"Patience and sorrow strove
Which should express her goodliest."—SHAKESPEARE.
"Je *la* plains, je *la* blame, et je suis son appui."*
—VOLTAIRE.

AND now Alice felt that she was on the wide world alone, with her child—no longer to be protected, but to protect; and, after the first few days of agony, a new spirit, not indeed of hope, but of endurance passed within her. Her solitary wanderings, with God her only guide, had tended greatly to elevate and confirm her character. She felt a strong reliance on his mysterious mercy—she felt, too, the responsibility of a mother. Thrown for so many months upon her own resources, even for the bread of life, her intellect was unconsciously sharpened, and a habit of patient fortitude had strengthened a nature originally clinging and femininely soft. She resolved to pass into some other county, for she could neither bear the thoughts that haunted the neighborhood around, nor think, without a loathing horror, of the possibility of her father's return. Accordingly, one day, she renewed her wanderings—and after a week's travel, arrived at a small village. Charity is so common in England, it so spontaneously springs up everywhere, like the good seed by the road-side, that she had rarely wanted the bare necessaries of existence. And her humble manner, and sweet, well-tuned voice, so free from the professional whine of mendicancy, had usually its charm for the sternest. So she generally obtained enough to buy bread and a night's lodging, and if sometimes she failed—she could bear hunger, and was not afraid of creeping into some shed, or, when by the sea-shore, even into some sheltering cavern. Her child throve too—for God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb! But now, so far as physical privation went, the worst was over.

It so happened that as Alice was drawing herself wearily along to the entrance of the village which was to bound her day's journey, she was met by a lady past middle age, in whose countenance compassion was so visible, that Alice would not beg, for she had a strange delicacy or pride, or whatever it may be called, and rather begged of the stern than of those who looked kindly at her—she did not like to lower herself in the eyes of the last.

The lady stopped.

"My poor girl, where are your going?"

"Where God pleases, madam," said Alice.

"Humph! and is that your own child?—you are almost a child yourself!"

"It is mine, madam," said Alice, gazing fondly at the infant;—"it is my all!"

"The lady's voice faltered. "Are you married?" she asked.

"Married!—Oh no, madame!" replied Alice, innocently, yet without blushing, for she never knew that she had done wrong in loving Maltravers.

The lady drew gently back, but not in horror—no, in still deeper compassion; for that lady had true virtue, and she knew that the faults of her sex are sufficiently punished to permit Virtue to pity them without a sin.

"I am sorry for it," she said, however, with greater gravity. "Are you travelling to seek the father?"

"Ah, madam! I shall never see him again!" And Alice wept.

"What!—he has abandoned you—so young, so beautiful!" added the lady to herself.

"Abandoned me!—no madam; but it is a long tale. Good evening—I thank you kindly for your pity."

The lady's eyes ran over.

"Stay," said she, "tell me frankly where you are going, and what is your object."

"Alas! madam, I am going anywhere, for I have no home; but I wish to live and work for my living, in order that my child may not want for anything. I wish I could maintain myself—*he* used to say I could."

* I pity her, I blame her, and am her support.

"He!—your language and manner are not those of a peasant. What can you do?—What do you know?"

"Music, and work, and—and——"

"Music!—this is strange! What were your parents?"

Alice shuddered, and hid her face with her hands.

The lady's interest was now fairly warmed in her behalf.

"She has sinned," said she to herself; "but at that age, how can one be harsh?—She must not be thrown upon the world to make sin a habit. Follow me," she said, after a little pause; "and think you have found a friend."

The lady then turned from the highroad down a green lane which led to a park lodge. This lodge she entered; and, after a short conversation with the inmate, beckoned to Alice to join her.

"Janet," said Alice's new protector to a comely and pleasant-eyed woman, "this is the young person—you will show her and the infant every attention. I shall send down proper clothing for her to-morrow, and I shall then have thought what will be best for her future welfare."

With that, the lady smiled benignly upon Alice, whose heart was too full to speak; and the door of the cottage closed upon her, and Alice thought the day had grown darker.

CHAPTER V.

"Believe me, she has won me much to pity her,
Alas! her gentle nature was not made
To buffet with adversity."—ROWE.

"Sober he was, and grave from early youth,
Mindful of forms, but more intent on truth;
In a light drab he uniformly dress'd,
And look serene th' unruffled mind express'd.
* * * * *
* * * * *
Yet might observers in his sparkling eye
Some observation, some acuteness spy;
The friendly thought it keen, the treacherous deem'd it sly;
Yet not a crime could foe or friend detect,
His actions all were like his speech correct—
Chaste, sober, solemn, and devout they named
Him who was this, and not of *this* ashamed.
—CRABBE.

"I'll on and sound the secret."
—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MRS. LESLIE, the lady introduced to the reader in the last chapter, was a woman of the firmest intellect combined (no unusual combination) with the softest heart. She learned Alice's history with admiration and pity. The natural innocence and honesty of the young mother spoke so eloquently in her words and looks, that Mrs. Leslie, on hearing her tale, found much less to forgive than she had anticipated. Still she deemed it necessary to enlighten Alice as to the criminality of the connection she had formed. But here Alice was singularly dull—she listened in meek patience to Mrs. Leslie's lecture; but it evidently made but slight impression on her. She had not yet seen enough of the Social state, to correct the first impressions of the Natural: and all she could say in answer to Mrs. Leslie was,—"It may be all very true, madam, but I have been so much better since I knew him!"

But though Alice took humbly any censure upon herself, she would not hear a syllable insinuated against Maltravers. When, in a very natural indignation, Mrs. Leslie denounced him as a destroyer of innocence—for Mrs. Leslie could not learn all that extenuated his offence—Alice started up with flashing eyes and heaving heart, and would have hurried from the only shelter she had in the wide world—she would sooner have died—she would sooner even had seen her child die, than done that idol of her soul, who, in her eyes, stood alone on some pinnacle between earth and heaven, the wrong of hearing him reviled. With difficulty Mrs. Leslie could restrain, with still more difficulty could she pacify and soothe, her; and, for the girl's petulance, which others might have deemed insolent or ungrateful, the woman heart of Mrs. Leslie loved her all the better. The more she saw of Alice, and the more she comprehended her story, and her character, the more was she lost in wonder at the romance of which this beautiful child had been the heroine, and the more perplexed she was as to Alice's future prospects.

At length, however, when she became acquainted with Alice's musical acquirements, which were, indeed, of no common order, a light broke in upon her. Here was the source of her future independence. Maltravers, it will be remembered, was a musician of consummate skill as well as taste, and Alice's natural talent for the art had advanced her, in

the space of months, to a degree of perfection, which it cost others—which it had cost even the quick Maltravers—years to obtain. But we learn so rapidly when our teachers are those we love! and it may be observed that the less our knowledge, the less, perhaps, our genius in other things, the more facile are our attainments in music, which is a very jealous mistress of the mind. Mrs. Leslie resolved to have her perfected in this art, and so enable her to become a teacher to others. In the town of C * * * * *, about thirty miles from Mrs. Leslie's house, though in the same county, there was no inconsiderable circle of wealthy and intelligent persons; for it was a cathedral town, and the resident clergy drew around them a kind of provincial aristocracy. Here, as in most rural towns in England, music was much cultivated, both among the higher and middle classes. There were amateur concerts, and glee-clubs, and subscriptions for sacred music; and once every five years, there was the great C* * * * * Festival. In this town, Mrs. Leslie established Alice; she placed her under the roof of a *ci-devant* music-master, who, having retired from his profession, was no longer jealous of rivals, but who, by handsome terms, was induced to complete the education of Alice. It was an eligible and comfortable abode, and the music-master and his wife were a good-natured, easy old couple.

Three months of resolute and unceasing perseverance, combined with the singular ductility and native gifts of Alice, sufficed to render her the most promising pupil the good musician had ever accomplished; and in three months more, introduced by Mrs. Leslie to many of the families in the place, Alice was established in a home of her own; and what with regular lessons, and occassional assistance at musical parties, she was fairly earning what her tutor reasonably pronounced to be "a very genteel independence."

Now, in these arrangements (for we must here go back a little), there had been one gigantic difficulty of conscience in one party, of feeling in another, to surmount. Mrs. Leslie saw at once, that unless Alice's misfortune was concealed, all the virtues and all the talents in the world could not enable her to retrace the one false step. Mrs. Leslie was a woman of habitual truth and strict rectitude, and she was sorely perplexed between the propriety of candor and its cruelty. She felt unequal to take the responsibility of action on herself; and, after much meditation, she resolved to confide her scruples to one, who, of all whom she knew, possessed the highest character for moral worth and religious sanctity.

This gentleman, lately a widower, lived at the outskirts of the town selected for Alice's future residence, and at that time happened to be on a visit in Mrs. Leslie's neighborhood. He was an opulent man, a banker; he had once represented the town in parliament, and, retiring, from disinclination to the late hours and onerous fatigues even of an unreformed House of Commons, he still possessed an influence to return one, if not both of the members for the city of C*****. And that influence was always exerted so as best to secure his own interest with the powers that be, and advance certain objects of ambition (for he was both an ostentatious and ambitious man in his own way) which he felt he might more easily obtain by proxy than by his own votes and voice in parliament—an atmosphere in which his light did not shine. And it was with a wonderful address that the banker contrived at once to support the government, and yet, by the frequent expression of liberal opinions, to conciliate the Whigs and the Dissenters of his neighborhood. Parties, political and sectarian, were not then so irreconcileable as they are now. In the whole county there was no one so respected as this eminent person, and yet he possessed no shining talents, though a laborious and energetic man of business.

It was solely and wholly the force of moral character which gave him his position in society. He felt this; he was sensitively proud of it; he was painfully anxious not to lose an atom of a distinction that required to be vigilantly secured. He was a very *remarkable*, yet not (perhaps could we penetrate all hearts) a very *uncommon* character—this banker! He had risen from, comparatively speaking, a low origin and humble fortunes, and entirely by the scrupulous and sedate propriety of his outward conduct. With such a propriety he, therefore, inseparably connected every notion of wordly prosperity and honor. Thus, though far from a bad man, he was forced into being something of a hypocrite. Every year he had grown more starch and

more saintly. He was conscience-keeper to the whole town; and it is astonishing how many persons hardly dared to make a will or subscribe to a charity without his advice. As he was a shrewd man of this world, as well as an accredited guide to the next, his advice was precisely of a nature to reconcile the Conscience and the Interest; and he was a kind of negotiator in the reciprocal diplomacy of earth and heaven. But our banker was really a charitable man, and a benevolent man, and a sincere believer. How, then, was he a hypocrite? Simply, because he professed to be far *more* charitable, *more* benevolent, and *more* pious, than he really was. His reputation had now arrived to that degree of immaculate polish, that the smallest breath, which would not have tarnished the character of another man, would have fixed an indelible stain upon his.

As he affected to be more strict than the churchman, and was a great oracle with all who regarded churchmen as lukewarm, so his conduct was narrowly watched by all the clergy of the orthodox cathedral, good men, doubtless, but not affecting to be saints, who were jealous at being so luminously out-shone by a layman and an authority of the sectarians. On the other hand, the intense homage, and almost worship, he received from his followers, kept his goodness upon a stretch, if not beyond all human power, certainly beyond his own. For "admiration" (as it is well said somewhere) is a kind of superstition which expects miracles." From nature, this gentleman had received an inordinate share of animal propensities; he had strong passions, he was by temperament a sensualist. He loved good-eating and good wine—he loved women. The two formal blessings of the carnal life, are not incompatible with canonization; but St. Anthony has shown that women, however angelic, are not precisely that order of angels. that saints may safely commune with. If, therefore, he ever yielded to temptations of a sexual nature, it was with profound secrecy and caution; nor did his right hand know what his left hand did.

This gentleman had married a woman much older than himself, but her fortune had been one of the necessary stepping-stones in his career. His exemplary conduct towards this lady, ugly as well as o'd, had done much towards increasing the odor of his sanctity. She died of an ague, and the widower did not shock probabilities by affecting too severe a grief.

"The Lord's will be done!" said he; "she was a good woman, but we should not set our affections too much upon His perishable creatures!"

This was all he was ever heard to say on the matter. He took an elderly gentlewoman distantly related to him, to manage his house, and sit at the head of the table; and it was thought not impossible, though the widower was past fifty, that he might marry again.

Such was the gentleman called by Mrs. Leslie, who, of the same religious opinions, had long known aud revered him, to decide the affairs of Alice and of Conscience.

As this man exercised no slight or fugitive influence over Alice Darvil's destinies, his counsels on the point in discussion ought to be fairly related.

"And now," said Mrs. Leslie, concluding the history, "you will perceive, my dear sir, that this poor young creature has been less culpable than she appears. From the extraordinary proficiency she has made in music, in a time, that, by her own account, seems incredibly short, I should suspect her unprincipled betrayer must have been an artist—a professional man. It is just possible that they may meet again, and (as the ranks between them cannot be so very disproportionate) that he may marry her. I am sure that he could not do a better or a wiser thing, for she loves him too fondly, despite her wrongs. Under these circumstances, would it be a—a—a culpable disguise of truth to represent her as a married woman separated from her husband—and give her the name of her seducer? Without such a precaution you will see, sir, that all hope of settling her reputably in life—all chance of procuring her any creditable independence, is out of the question. Such is my dilemma. What is your advice?—palatable or not, I shall abide by it."

The banker's grave and saturnine countenance exhibited a slight degree of embarrassment at the case submitted to him. He began brushing away, with the cuff of his black coat, some atoms of dust that had settled on his drab small-clothes; and, after a slight pause, he replied, "Why, really, dear madam, the

question is one of much delicacy—I doubt if men could be good judges upon it; your sex's tact and instinct on these matters are better—much better than our sagacity. There is much in the dictates of your own heart; for to those who are in the grace of the Lord, He vouchsafes, to communicate his pleasure, by spiritual hints and inward suggestions!"

"If so, my dear sir, the matter is decided; for my heart whispers me, that this sight deviation, from truth would be a less culpable offence than turning so young and, I had almost said, so innocent a creature adrift upon the world. I may take your opinion as my sanction."

"Why, really, I can scarcely say so much as that," said the banker, with a slight smile. "A deviation, from truth cannot be incurred without some forfeiture of strict duty."

"Not in any case. Alas, I was afraid so!" said Mrs. Leslie, despondingly.

"In any case! Oh, there *may* be cases! But had I not better see the young woman, and ascertain that your benevolent heart has not deceived you?"

"I wish you would," said Mrs. Leslie, "she is now in the house. I will ring for her."

"Should we not be alone?"

"Certainly; I will leave you together."

Alice was sent for, and appeared.

"This pious gentleman," said Mrs. Leslie, "will confer with you for a few moments, my child. Do not be afraid; he is the best of men." With these words of encouragement the good lady vanished, and Alice saw before her a tall, dark man, with a head bald in front, yet larger behind than before, with spectacles upon a pair of shrewd, penetrating eyes, and an outline of countenance that showed he must have been handsome in earlier manhood.

"My young friend," said the banker, seating himself, after a deliberate survey of the fair countenance that blushed beneath his gaze, "Mrs. Leslie and myself have been conferring upon your temporal welfare. You have been unfortunate, my child?"

"Ah—yes."

"Well, well, you are very young; we must not be too severe upon youth. You will never do so again?"

"Do what, please you, sir?"

"What! Humph! I mean that you will be more rigid, more circumspect. Men are deceitful; you must be on your guard against them. You are handsome, child, very handsome—more's the pity." And the banker took Alice's hand and pressed it with great unction. Alice looked at him gravely, and drew the hand away instinctively.

The banker lowered his spectacles, and gazed at her without their aid; his eyes were still fine and expressive. "What is your name?" he asked.

"Alice—Alice Darvil, sir."

"Well, Alice, we have been considering what is best for you. You wish to earn your own livelihood, and perhaps marry some honest man hereafter?"

"Marry, sir—never!" said Alice, with great earnestness, her eyes filling with tears.

"And why?"

"Because I shall never see *him* on earth, and they do not marry in heaven, sir."

The banker was moved, for he was not worse than his neighbors, though trying to make them believe he was so much better.

"Well, time enough to talk of that; but in the meanwhile you would support yourself?"

"Yes, sir. His child ought to be a burthen to none—nor I either. I once wished to die, but then who would love my little one? *Now* I wish to live."

"But what mode of livelihood would you prefer? Would you go into a family, in some capacity?—not that of a servant—you are too delicate for that."

"Oh, no—no!"

"But, again, why?" asked the banker soothingly, yet surprised.

"Because," said Alice, almost solemnly, "there are some hours when I feel I must be alone. I sometimes think I am not all right *here*," and she touched her forehead. "They called me an idiot before I knew *him*!—No, I could not live with others, for I can only cry when nobody but my child is with me."

This was said with such unconscious, and therefore with such pathetic simplicity, that the banker was sensibly affected. He rose, stirred the fire, resettled himself, and after a pause, said emphatically—"Alice, I will be your friend. Let me believe you will deserve it."

Alice bent her graceful head, and seeing that he had sunk into an abstructed silence, she thought it time for her to withdraw.

"She is, indeed, beautiful," said the banker, almost aloud, when he was alone; "and the old lady is right—she is as innocent as if she had not fallen. I wonder——" Here he stopped short, and walked to the glass over the mantel-piece, where he was still gazing on his own features, when Mrs. Leslie returned.

"Well, sir," said she, a little surprised at this seeming vanity in so pious a man.

The banker started. "Madam, I honor your penetration as much as your charity; I think that there is so much to be feared in letting all the world know this young female's past error, that, though I dare not advise, I cannot blame, your concealment of it."

"But sir, yonr words have sunk deep into my thoughts; you said every deviation from truth was a forfeiture of duty."

"Certainly; but there are some exceptions. The world is a bad world, we are born in sin, and the children of wrath. We do not tell infants all the truth, when they ask us questions, the proper answers of which would mislead, not enlighten, them. In some things the whole world are infants. The very science of government is the science of concealing truth —so is the system of trade. We could not blame the tradesman for not telling the public, that if all his debts were called in he would be a bankrupt."

"And he may marry her, after all—this Mr. Butler."

"Heaven forbid—the villain!—Well, madam, I will see to this poor young thing—she shall not want a guide."

"Heaven reward you. How wicked some people are to call you severe!"

"I can bear *that* blame with a meek temper, madam. Good day."

"Good day. You will remember how strictly confidential has been our conversation."

"Not a breath shall transpire. I will send you some tracts to-morrow—so comforting. Heaven bless you!"

This difficulty smoothed, Mrs. Leslie, to her astonishment, found that she had another to contend with in Alice herself. For, first, Alice conceived that to change her name and keep her secret, was to confess that she ought to be ashamed, rather than proud, of her love to Ernest, and she thought that so ungrateful to him!—and, secondly, to take his name, to pass for his wife—what presumption—he would certainly have a right to be offended! At these scruples, Mrs. Leslie well-nigh lost all patience; and the banker, to his own surprise, was again called in. We have said that he was an experienced and skilful adviser, which implies the faculty of persuasion. He soon saw the handle by which Alice's obstinacy might always be moved—her little girl's welfare. He put this so forcibly before her eyes; he represented the child's future fate as resting so much, not only on her own good conduct, but on her outward respectability, that he prevailed upon her at last; and, perhaps, one argument that he incidentally used, had as much effect on her as the rest.

"This Mr. Butler, if yet in England, may pass through our town—may visit amongst us —may hear you spoken of, by a name similar to his own, and curiosity would thus induce him to seek you. Take his name, and you will always bear an honorable index to your mutual discovery and recognition. Besides when you are respectable, honored, and earning an independence, he may not be too proud to marry you. But take your own name, avow your own history, and not only will your child be an outcast, yourself a beggar, or, at best, a menial dependant, but you lose every hope of recovering the object of your too-devoted attachment."

Thus Alice was convinced. From that time she became close and reserved in her communications. Mrs. Leslie had wisely selected a town sufficiently remote from her own abode to preclude any revelations of her domestics; and, as Mrs. Butler, Alice attracted universal sympathy and respect from the exercise of her talents, the modest sweetness of her manners, the unblemished propriety of her conduct. Somehow or other, no sooner did she learn the philosophy of concealment, than she made a great leap in knowledge of the world. And, though flattered and courted by the young loungers of C * * * * *, she steered her course with so much address, that she was never persecuted. For there are few men in the world who make advances where there is no encouragement.

The Banker observed her conduct with silent vigilance. He met her often, he visited her often. He was intimate at houses where she attended to teach or perform. He

lent her good books—he advised her—he preached to her. Alice began to look up to him—to like him—to consider him, as a village girl in Catholic countries may consider a benevolent and kindly priest. And he—what was his object?—at that time it is impossible to guess:—he became thoughtful and abstracted.

One day an old maid and an old clergyman met in the High Street of C * * * * *.

"And how do you do, ma'am?" said the clergyman; "how is the rheumatism?"

"Better, thank you, sir. Any news?"

The clergyman smiled, and something hovered on his lips which he suppressed.

"Were you," the old maid resumed, "at Mrs. Macnab's last night? Charming music?"

"Charming! How pretty that Mrs. Butler is! and how humble! Knows her station—so unlike professional people."

"Yes, indeed!—What attention a certain banker paid her!"

"He! he! he! yes; he is very fatherly—very!"

"Perhaps he will marry again; he is always talking of the holy state of matrimony—a holy state it may be—but Heaven knows, his wife, poor woman, did not make it a pleasant one."

"There may be more causes for that than we guess of," said the clergyman, mysteriously. "I would not be uncharitable, but——"

"But what?"

"Oh, when he was young, our great man was not so correct, I fancy, as he is now."

"So I have heard it whispered; but nothing against him was ever known."

"Hem—it is very odd!"

"What's very odd?"

"Why, but it's a secret—I dare say it's all very right."

"Oh, I shan't say a word. Are you going to the cathedral?—don't let me keep you standing. Now, pray proceed!"

"Well, then, yesterday I was doing duty in a village more than twenty miles hence, and I loitered in the village to take an early dinner; and, afterwards, while my horse was feeding, I strolled down the green."

"Well—well?"

"And I saw a gentleman muffled carefully up, with his hat slouched over his face, at the door of a cottage, with a little child in his arms, and he kissed it more fondly than, be we ever so good, we generally kiss other people's children; and then he gave it to a peasant woman standing near him, and mounted his horse, which was tied to the gate, and trotted past me: and who do you think this was?"

"Patience me—I can't guess!"

"Why, our saintly banker. I bowed to him, and I assure you he turned as red, ma'am, as your waistband."

"My!"

"I just turned into the cottage when he was out of sight, for I was thirsty, and asked for a glass of water, and I saw the child. I declare, I would not be uncharitable, but I thought it monstrous like—you know whom!"

"Gracious! you don't say——"

"I asked the woman 'if it was hers?' and she said 'No,' but was very short."

"Dear me, I *must* find this out!—What is the name of the village?"

"Covedale."

"Oh, I know—I know."

"Not a word of this; I dare say there's nothing in it. But I am not much in favor of your new lights."

"Nor I neither. What better than the good old Church of England?"

"Madam, your sentiments do you honor; you'll be sure not to say anything of our little mystery."

"Not a syllable."

Two days after this, three old maids made an excursion to the village of Covedale, and lo! the cottage in question was shut up—the woman and the child were gone. The people in the village knew nothing about them—had seen nothing particular in the woman or child—had always supposed them mother and daughter; and the gentleman identified by the clerical inquisitor with the banker, had never but once been observed in the place.

"The vile old parson," said the eldest of the old maids, "to take away so good a man's character!——and the fly will cost one pound two, with the baiting!"

CHAPTER VI.

"In this disposition was I, when looking out of my window one day to take the air, I perceived a kind of peasant who looked at me very attentively."

—GIL BLAS.

A SUMMER'S evening in a retired country

town has something melancholy in it. You have the streets of a metropolis without their animated bustle—you have the stillness of the country without its birds and flowers. The reader will please to bring before him a quiet street, in the quiet country town of C * * * * *, in a quiet evening in quiet June: the picture is not mirthful—two young dogs are playing in the street, one old dog is watching by a newly-painted door. A few ladies of middle age move noiselessly along the pavement, returning home to tea: they wear white muslin dresses, green spencers a little faded, straw poke bonnets, with green or coffee-colored gauze veils. By twos and threes they have disappeared within the thresholds of small, neat houses, with little railings, enclosing little green plots. Threshold, house, railing, and plot, each as like to the other as are those small commodities called "nest tables," which, "even as a broken mirror muitiplies," summon to the bewildered eye countless iterations of one four-legged individual. Paradise Place was a set of nest houses.

A cow had passed through the streets with a milkwoman behind; two young and gay shopmen, "looking after the gals," had reconnoitred the street, and vanished in despair. The twilight advanced—but gently; and though a star or two were up, the air was still clear. At the open window of one of the tenements in this street sate Alice Darvil. She had been working (that pretty excuse to women for thinking), and as the thoughts grew upon her, and the evening waned, the work had fallen upon her knee, and her hands dropped mechanically on her lap. Her profile was turned towards the street; but without moving her head or changing her attitude, her eyes glanced from time to time to her little girl, who nestled on the ground beside her, tired with play; and, wondering, perhaps, why she was not already in bed, seemed as tranquil as the young mother herself. And sometimes Alice's eyes filled with tears—and then she sighed, as if to sigh the tears away. But, poor Alice, if she grieved, hers was now a silent and a patient grief!

The street was deserted of all other passengers, when a man passed along the pavement on the side opposite to Alice's house. His garb was rude and homely, between that of a laborer and a farmer; but still there was an affectation of tawdry show about the bright scarlet silk handkerchief, tied in a sailor or smuggler fashion round the sinewy throat; the hat was set jauntily on one side, and, dangling many an inch from the gaily-striped waistcoat, glittered a watch-chain and seals, which appeared suspiciously out of character with the rest of the attire. The passenger was covered with dust; and as the street was in a suburb communicating with the high road, and formed one of the entrances into the town, he had probably after a long day's journey, reached his evening's destination. The looks of this stranger were anxious, restless, and perturbed. In his gait and swagger there was the recklessness of the professional blackguard; but in his vigilant, prying, suspicious eyes, there was a hand-dog expression of apprehension and fear. He seemed a man upon whom Crime had set its significant mark—and who saw a purse with one eye and a gibbet with the other. Alice did not note the stranger, until she herself had attracted and centered all his attention.

He halted abruptly as he caught a view of her face—shaded his eyes with his hand as if to gaze more intently—and at length burst into an exclamation of surprise and pleasure. At that instant Alice turned, and her gaze met that of the stranger. The fascination of the basilisk can scarcely more stun and paralyze its victim than the look of this stranger charmed, with the appalling glamoury of horror, the eye and soul of Alice Darvil. Her face became suddenly locked and rigid, her lips as white as marble, her eyes almost started from their sockets—she pressed her hands convulsively together, and shuddered—but still she did not move. The man nodded and grinned, and then, deliberately crossing the street, gained the door, and knocked loudly. Still Alice did not stir—her senses seemed to have forsaken her—presently the stranger's loud, rough voice was heard below, in answer to the accents of the solitary woman-servant whom Alice kept in her employ; and his strong, heavy tread made the slight staircase creak and tremble. Then Alice rose as by an instinct, caught her child in her arms, and stood erect and motionless, facing the door. It opened—and the FATHER and DAUGHTER were once more face to face within the same walls.

"Well, Alley, how are you, my blowen?—

glad to see your old dad again, I'll be sworn. No ceremony, sit down. Ha, ha! snug here —very snug—we shall live together charmingly. Trade on your own account—eh? sly; —well can't desert your poor old father. Let's have something to eat and drink."

So saying, Darvil threw himself at length upon the neat, prim, little chintz sofa, with the air of a man resolved to make himself perfectly at home.

Alice gazed, and trembled violently, but still said nothing—the power of voice had indeed left her.

"Come, why don't you stir your stumps? I suppose I must wait on myself—fine manners! —But, ho, ho—a bell, by gosh—mighty grand —never mind—I am used to call for my own wants."

A hearty tug at the frail bell-rope sent a shrill alarum half way through the long lath-and-plaster row of Paradise Place, and left the instrument of the sound in the hand of its creator.

Up came the maid-servant, a formal old woman, most respectable.

"Harkye, old girl!" said Darvil; "bring up the best you have to eat—not particular—let there be plenty. And I say—a bottle of brandy. Come, don't stand there staring like a stuck pig. Budge! Hell and furies! don't you hear me?"

The servant retreated, as if a pistol had been put to her head, and Darvil, laughing loud, threw himself again upon the sofa. Alice looked at him, and, still without saying a word, glided from the room—her child in her arms. She hurried down stairs, and in the hall met her servant. The latter, who was much attached to her mistress, was alarmed to see her about to leave the house.

"Why, marm, where be you going? Dear heart, you have no bonnet on! What is the matter? Who is this?"

"Oh!" cried Alice, in agony; "what shall I do?—where shall I fly?" The door above opened. Alice heard, started, and the next moment was in the street. She ran on breathlessly, and like one insane. Her mind was, indeed, for the time, gone, and had a river flowed before her way, she would have plunged into an escape from a world that seemed too narrow to hold a father and his child.

But just as she turned the corner of a street that led into the more public thoroughfares, she felt her arm grasped, and a voice called out her name in surprised and startled accents.

"Heavens, Mrs. Butler! Alice! What do I see? What is the matter?"

"Oh, sir, save me!—you are a good man—a great man—save me—he is returned!"

"He! who?—Mr. Butler?" said the banker, (for that gentleman it was), in a changed and trembling voice.

"No, no—ah, not he!—I did not say *he*—I said my father—my, my—ah—look behind—look behind—*is* he coming?"

"Calm yourself, my dear young friend—no one is near. I will go and reason with your father. No one shall harm you—I will protect you. Go back—go back, I will follow—we must not be seen together." And the tall banker seemed trying to shrink into a nutshell.

"No, no," said Alice, growing yet paler, "I cannot go back."

"Well, then, just follow me to the door—your servant shall get you your bonnet, and accompany you to my house, where you can wait till I return. Meanwhile I will see your father, and rid you, I trust, of his presence."

The banker, who spoke in a very hurried and even impatient voice, waited for no reply, but took his way to Alice's house. Alice herself did not follow, but remained in the very place where she was left, till joined by her servant, who then conducted her to the rich man's residence. . . . . But Alice's mind had not recovered its shock, and her thoughts wandered alarmingly.

CHAPTER VII.

"*Miramont.*—Do they chafe roundly?
Andrew.—As they were rubbed with soap, sir.
And now they swear aloud, now calm again
Like a ring of bells, whose sound the wind still utters,
And then they sit in council what to do,
And then they jar again what shall be done?"
—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

OH! what a picture of human nature it was when the banker and the vagabond sate together in that little drawing-room, facing each other,—one in the arm-chair, one on the sofa! Darvil was still employed on some cold meat,

and was making wry faces at the very indifferent brandy which he had frightened the formal old servant into buying at the nearest public-house; and opposite sate the respectable—highly respectable, man of forms and ceremonies, of decencies and quackeries, gazing gravely upon this low, dare-devil ruffian:—the well-to-do hypocrite—the penniless villain;—the man who had everything to lose—the man who had nothing in the wide world but his own mischievous, rascally life, a gold watch, chain and seals, which he had stolen the day before, and thirteen shillings and threepence halfpenny in his left breeches-pocket!

The man of wealth was by no means well acquainted with the nature of the beast before him. He had heard from Mrs. Leslie (as we remember) the outline of Alice's history, and ascertained that their joint protegé's father was a great blackguard; but he expected to find Mr. Darvil a mere dull, brutish villain, a peasant-ruffian—a blunt serf, without brains, or their substitue, effrontery. But Luke Darvil was a clever, half-educated fellow; he did not sin from ignorance, but had wit enough to have bad principles, and he was as impudent as if he had lived all his life in the best society. He was not frightened at the banker's drab breeches and imposing air—not he! The Duke of Wellington would not have frightened Luke Darvil, unless his Grace had had the constables for his *aides-de-camp*.

The banker, to use a homely phrase, was "taken aback."

"Look you here, Mr. What's your name?" said Darvil, swallowing a glass of the raw alcohol as if it had been water—"look you now—you can't humbug me. What the devil do you care about my daughter's respectability or comfort, or anything else, grave old dog as you are!—It is my daughter herself you are licking your brown old chaps at!—and 'faith my Alley is a very pretty girl—very—but queer as moonshine. You'll drive a much better bargain with me than with her."

The banker colored scarlet—he bit his lips, and measured his companion from head to foot, (while the latter lolled on the sofa), as if he were meditating the possibility of kicking him down stairs. But Luke Darvil would have thrashed the banker, and all his clerks into the bargain. His frame was like a trunk of thews and muscles, packed up by that careful dame, Nature, as tightly as possible, and a prize-fighter would have thought twice before he had entered the ring against so awkward a customer. The banker was a man prudent to a fault, and he pushed his chair six inches back, as he concluded his survey.

"Sir," then said he, very quietly, "do not let us misunderstand each other. Your daughter is safe from your control—if you molest her, the law will protect——"

"She is not of age," said Darvil. "Your health, old boy."

"Whether she is of age or not," returned the banker, unheeding the courtesy conveyed in the last sentence, "I do not care three straws—I know enough of the law to know, that if she have rich friends in this town, and you have none, she will be protected, and you will go to the treadmill."

"That is spoken like a sensible man," said Darvil, for the first time with a show of respect in his manner; "you now take a practical view of matters, as we used to say at the spouting-club."

"If I were in your situation, Mr. Darvil, I tell you what I would do. I would leave my daughter and this town to-morrow morning, and I would promise never to return, and never to molest her, on condition she allowed me a certain sum from her earnings, paid quarterly."

"And if I preferred living with her?"

"In that case, I, as a magistrate of this town, would have you sent away as a vagrant, or apprehended——"

"Ha!"

"Apprehended on suspicion of stealing that gold chain and seals which you wear so ostentatiously.

"By goles, but you're a clever fellow," said Darvil, involuntarily; "you know human nature."

The banker smiled: strange to say, he was pleased with the compliment.

"But," resumed Darvil, helping himself to another slice of beef, "you are in the wrong box—planted in Queer Street, as *we* say in London, for if you care a d——n about my daughter's respectability, you will never muzzle her father on suspicion of theft—and so there's tit for tat, my old gentleman!"

"I shall deny that you are her father, Mr. Darvil; and I think you will find it hard to

prove the fact in any town where I am a magistrate."

"By goles, what a good prig you would have made! You are as sharp as a gimlet. Surely you were brought up at the Old Bailey!"

"Mr. Darvil be ruled. You seem a man not deaf to reason, and I ask you whether, in any town in this country, a poor man in suspicious circumstances can do anything against a rich man whose character is established? Perhaps, you are right in the main: I have nothing to do with that. But I tell you that you shall quit this house in half-an-hour—that you shall never enter it again but at your peril; and if you do—within ten minutes from that time you shall be in the town jail. It is no longer a contest between you and your defenceless daughter; it is a contest between——"

"A tramper in fustian and a gemman as drives a coach," interrupted Darvil, laughing bitterly, yet heartily, "Good—good!"

The banker rose. "I think you have made a very clever definition," said he. "Half-an-hour—you recollect—good evening."

"Stay," said Darvil; "you are the first man I have seen for many a year that I can take a fancy to. Sit down—sit down I say, and talk a bit, and we shall come to terms soon, I dare say:—that's right. Lord! how I should like to have you on the road-side instead of within these four gimcrack walls. Ha! ha! the argufying would be all in *my* favor then."

The Banker was not a brave man, and his color changed slightly at the intimation of this obliging wish. Darvil eyed him grimly and chuckingly.

The rich man resumed: "That may or may not be, Mr. Darvil, according as I might happen or not to have pistols about me. But to the point. Quit this house without further debate, without noise, without mentioning to any one else your claim upon its owner——"

"Well, and the return?"

"Ten guineas now, and the same sum quarterly, as long as the young lady lives in this town, and you never persecute her by word or letter."

"That is forty guineas a year. I can't live upon it."

"You will cost less in the House of Correction, Mr. Darvil."

"Come, make it a hundred: Alley is cheap at that."

"Not a farthing more," said the banker, buttoning up his breeches-pockets with a determined air.

"Well, out with the shiners."

"Do you promise or not?"

"I promise."

"There are your ten guineas. If in half-an-hour you are not gone—why then——"

"Then?"

"Why then you have robbed me of ten guineas, and must take the usual consequences of robbery.

Darvil started to his feet—his eyes glared—he grasped the carving-knife before him.

"You are a bold fellow," said the banker, quietly; "but it won't do. It is not worth your while to murder me; and I am a man sure to be missed."

Darvil sunk down, sullen and foiled. The respectable man was more than a match for the villain.

"Had you been as poor as I,—Gad! what a rogue you would have been!"

"I think not," said the banker; "I believe roguery to be a very bad policy. Perhaps once I *was* almost as poor as you are, but I never turned rogue."

"You never were in my circumstances," returned Darvil, gloomily. "I was a gentleman's son. Come, you shall hear my story. My father was well-born, but married a maid-servant when he was at college; his family disowned him, and left him to starve. He died in the struggle against a poverty he was not brought up to, and my dam went into service again; became housekeeper to an old bachelor—sent me to school—but mother had a family by the old bachelor, and I was taken from school and put to trade. All hated me—for I was ugly; damn them! Mother cut me—I wanted money—robbed the old bachelor—was sent to jail, and learned there a lesson or two how to rob better in future. Mother died,—I was adrift on the world. The world was my foe—could not make it up with the world, so we went to war;—you understand, old boy? Married a poor woman and pretty;—wife made me jealous—had learned to suspect every one. Alice born—did not believe her mine: not like me—perhaps a gentleman's child. I hate—I loathe gentlemen. Got

drunk one night—kicked my wife in the stomach three weeks after her confinement. Wife died—tried for my life—got off. Went to another county—having had a sort of education, and being sharp eno', got work as a mechanic. Hated work just as I hated gentlemen—for was I not by blood a gentleman? There was the curse. Alice grew up; never looked on her as my flesh and blood. Her mother was a w——! Why should not *she* be one? There, that's enough. Plenty of excuse, I think, for all I have ever done. Curse the world—curse the rich—curse the handsome—curse—curse all!"

"You have been a very foolish man," said the banker; "and seem to me to have had very good cards, if you had known how to play them. However, that is your look out. It is not yet too late to repent;—age is creeping on you.—Man, there is another world."

The banker said the last words with a tone of solemn and even dignified adjuration.

"You think so—do you?" said Darvil, staring at him.

"From my soul I do."

"Then you are not the sensible man I took you for," replied Darvil, drily; "and I should like to talk to you on that subject."

But our Dives, however sincere a believer, was by no means one

> ——"At whose control
> Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul."

He had words of comfort for the pious, but he had none for the sceptic—he could soothe, but he could not convert. It was not in his way; besides, he saw no credit in making a convert of Luke Darvil. Accordingly, he again rose with some quickness, and said—

"No, sir; that is useless, I fear, and I have no time to spare; and so once more, good night to you."

"But you have not arranged where my allowance is to be sent."

"Ah! true; I will guarantee it. You will find my name sufficient security."

"At least, it is the best I can get," returned Darvil, carelessly, "and, after all, it is not a bad chance-day's work. But I'm sure I can't say where the money shall be sent. I don't know a man who would not grab it."

"Very well, then—the best thing (I speak as a man of business) will be to draw on me for ten guineas, quarterly. Wherever you are staying, any banker can effect this for you. But mind, if ever you overdraw, the account stops."

"I understand," said Darvil; "and when I have finished the bottle I shall be off."

"You had better," replied the banker, as he opened the door.

The rich man returned home hurriedly. "So Alice, after all, has some gentle blood in her veins," thought he. "But that father,—no, it will never do. I wish he were hanged and nobody the wiser. I should very much like to arrange the matter without marrying; but then—scandal—scandal—scandal. After all, I had better give up all thoughts of her. She is monstrous handsome, and so—humph! —I shall never grow an old man."

CHAPTER VIII.

> "Began to bend down his admiring eyes
> On all her touching looks and qualities,
> Turning their shapely sweetness every way
> 'Till 'twas his food and habit day by day."
>
> —LEIGH HUNT.

THERE must have been a secret something about Alice Darvil singularly captivating, that (associated as she was with images of the most sordid and the vilest crime) left her still pure and lovely alike in the eyes of a man as fastidious as Ernest Maltravers, and of a man as influenced by all the thoughts and theories of the world, as the shrewd banker of C * * * * *. Amidst things foul and hateful had sprung up this beautiful flower, as if to preserve the inherent heavenliness and grace of human nature, and proclaim the handiwork of God in scenes where human nature had been most debased by the abuses of social art; and where the light of God himself was most darkened and obscured. That such contrasts, though rarely and as by chance, are found, every one who has carefully examined the wastes and deserts of life must own. I have drawn Alice Darvil scrupulously from life; and I can declare that I have not exaggerated hue or lineament in the portrait. I do not suppose, with our good banker, that she owed anything, unless it might be a greater delicacy of form and feature, to whatever mixture of gentle

blood was in her veins. But, somehow or other, in her original conformation there was the happy bias of the plants towards the Pure and the Bright. For, despite Helvetius, a common experience teaches us that though education and circumstances may mould the mass, Nature herself sometimes forms the individual, and throws into the clay, or its spirit, so much of beauty or deformity, that nothing can utterly subdue the original elements of character.

From sweets one draws poison—from poisons another extracts but sweets. But I, often deeply pondering over the psychological history of Alice Darvil, think that one principal cause why she escaped the early contaminations around her, was in the slow and protracted development of her intellectual faculties, Whether or not the brutal violence of her father had in childhood acted through the nerves upon the brain, certain it is that until she knew Maltravers—until she loved—till she was cherished—her mind had seemed torpid and locked up. True, Darvil had taught her nothing; nor permitted her to be taught anything; but that mere ignorance would have been no preservation to a quick, observant mind. It was the bluntness of the senses themselves that operated like an armor between her mind and the vile things around her. It was the rough, dull covering of the chrysalis, framed to bear rude contact and biting weather, that the butterfly might break forth, winged and glorious, in due season. Had Alice been a quick child, Alice would have probably grown up a depraved and dissolute woman; but she comprehended, she understood little or nothing, till she found an inspirer in that affection which inspires both beast and man; which makes the dog (in his natural state one of the meanest of the savage race) a companion, a guardian, a protector, and raises Instinct half-way to the height of Reason.

The banker had a strong regard for Alice; and when he reached home, he heard with great pain that she was in a high state of fever. She remained beneath his roof that night, and the elderly gentlewoman, his relation and *gouvernante*, attended her. The banker slept but little; and the next morning his countenance was unusually pale.

Towards daybreak Alice had fallen into a sound and refreshing sleep; and when on waking, she found, by a note from her host, that her father had left her house, and she might return in safety and without fear, a violent flood of tears, followed by long and grateful prayer, contributed to the restoration of her mind and nerves. Imperfect as this young woman's notions of abstract right and wrong still were, she was yet sensible to the claims of a father (no matter how criminal) upon his child: for feelings with her were so good and true, that they supplied in a great measure the place of principles. She knew that she could not have lived under the same roof with her dreadful parent; but she still felt an uneasy remorse at thinking he had been driven from that roof in destitution and want.

"She hastened to dress herself and seek an audience with her protector; and the latter found with admiration and pleasure that he had anticipated her own instantaneous and involuntary design in the settlement made upon Darvil. He then communicated to Alice the compact he had already formed with her father, and she wept and kissed his hand when she heard, and secretly resolved that she would work hard to be enabled to increase the sum allowed. Oh, if her labors could serve to retrieve a parent from the necessity of darker resources for support! Alas! when crime has become a custom, it is like gaming or drinking—the excitement is wanting; and had Luke Darvil been suddenly made inheritor of the wealth of a Rothschild, he would either still have been a villain in one way or the other; or ennui would have awakened conscience, and he would have died of the change of habit.

Our banker always seemed more struck by Alice's moral feelings than even by her physical beauty. Her love for her child, for instance, impressed him powerfully, and he always gazed upon her with softer eyes when he saw her caressing or nursing the little fatherless creature, whose health was now delicate and precarious. It is difficult to say whether he was absolutely in love with Alice; the phrase is too strong, perhaps, to be applied to a man past fifty, who had gone through emotions and trials enough to wear away freshness from his heart. His feelings altogether for Alice, the designs he entertained towards her, were of a very complicated nature; and it will be long,

perhaps, before the reader can thoroughly comprehend them. He conducted Alice home that day; but he said little by the way, perhaps because his female relation, for appearance' sake, accompanied them also. He, however, briefly cautioned Alice on no account to communicate to any one that it was her father who had been her visitor; and she still shuddered too much at the reminiscence to appear likely to converse on it. The banker also judged it advisable to be so far confidential with Alice's servant as to take her aside, and tell her that the inauspicious stranger of the previous evening had been a very distant relation of Mrs. Butler, who, from a habit of drunkenness, had fallen into evil and disorderly courses.

The banker added with a sanctified air that he trusted by a little serious conversation, he had led the poor man to better notions, and that he had gone home with an altered mind to his family. "But, my good Hannah," he concluded, "You know you are a superior person, and above the vulgar sin of indiscriminate gossip; therefore, mention what has occurred to no one; it can do no good to Mrs. Butler—it may hurt the man himself, who is well to do—better off than he seems; and who, I hope, with grace, may be a sincere penitent, and it will also—but that is nothing—very seriously displease me. By the by, Hannah, I shall be able to get your grandson into the Free School. The banker was shrewd enough to perceive that he had carried his point; and he was walking home, satisfied, on the whole, with the way matters had been arranged, when he was met by a brother magistrate.

"Ha!" said the latter, "and how are you, my good sir? Do you know that we have had the Bow Street officers here, in search of a notorious villain who has broken from prison? He is one of the most determined and dexterous burglars in all England, and the runners have hunted him into our town. His very robberies have tracked him by the way. He robbed a gentleman the day before yesterday of his watch, and left him for dead on the road—this was not thirty miles hence."

"Bless me!" said the banker, with emotion; "and what is the wretch's name?"

"Why, he has as many aliases as a Spanish grandee; but I believe the last name he has assumed is Peter Watts."

"Oh!" said our friend, relieved,—"well, have the runners found him?"

"No, but they are on his scent. A fellow answering to his description was seen by the man at the toll-bar, at daybreak this morning, on the way to F***: the officers are after him."

"I hope he may meet with his deserts—and crime is never unpunished, even in this world. My best compliments to your lady:—and how is little Jack?—Well! glad to hear it—fine boy, little Jack!—good day."

"Good day, my dear sir. Worthy man, that!"

CHAPTER IX.

"But who is this? thought he, a demon vile,
With wicked meaning and a vulgar style;
Hammond they call him—they can give the name
Of man to devils;—Why am I so tame?
Why crush I not the viper? Fear replied,
Watch him awhile and let his strength be tried."
—CRABBE.

THE next morning, after breakfast, the banker took his horse—a crop-eared, fast-trotting hackney—and merely leaving word that he was going upon business into the country, and should not return to dinner, turned his back on the spires of C*****.

He rode slowly, for the day was hot. The face of the country, which was fair and smiling, might have tempted others to linger by the way: but our hard and practical man of the world was more influenced by the weather than the loveliness of the scenery. He did not look upon Nature with the eye of imagination; perhaps a railroad, had it then and there existed, would have pleased him better than the hanging woods, the shadowy valleys, and the changeful river that from time to time beautified the landscape on either side the road. But, after all, there is a vast deal of hypocrisy in the affected admiration for Nature;—and I don't think one person in a hundred cares for what lies by the side of a road, so long as the road itself is good, hills levelled, and turnpikes cheap.

It was midnoon, and many miles had been passed, when the banker turned down a green lane and quickend his pace. At the end of about three quarters of an hour, he arrived at a little solitary inn, called "The Angler,"—

put up his horse, ordered his dinner at six o'clock—begged to borrow a basket to hold his fish—and it was then apparent that a long-ish cane he had carried with him was capable of being extended into a fishing-rod. He fitted in the various joints with care, as if to be sure no accident had happened to the implement by the journey—pried anxiously into the contents of a black case of lines and flies slung the basket behind his back, and while his horse was putting down its nose and whisking about its tail, in the course of those nameless coquetries that horses carry on with hostlers—our worthy brother of the rod strode rapidly through some green fields, gained the river side, and began fishing with much semblance of earnest interest in the sport. He had caught one trout, seemingly by accident—for the astonished fish was hooked up on the outside of its jaw—probably while in the act, not of biting, but gazing at, the bait, when he grew discontented with the spot he had selected; and, after looking round as if to convince himself that he was not liable to be disturbed or observed (a thought hateful to the fishing fraternity), he stole quickly along the margin, and finally quitting the river side altogether, struck into a path that, after a sharp, walk of nearly an hour, brought him to the door of a cottage.

He knocked twice, and then entered of his own accord—nor was it till the summer sun was near its decline that the banker regained his inn. His simple dinner, which they had delayed in wonder at the protracted absence of the angler, and in expectation of the fishes he was to bring back to be fried, was soon despatched; his horse was ordered to the door, and the red clouds in the west already betokened the lapse of another day, as he spurred from the spot on the fast-trotting hackney, fourteen miles an hour.

"That ere gemman has a nice bit of blood," said the hostler, scratching his ear.

"Oiy,—who be he?" said a hanger-on of the stables.

"I dooant know. He has been here twice afoar, and he never cautches anything to sinnify—he be mighty fond of fishing, sure*ly*."

Meanwhile, away sped the banker—milestone on milestone glided by—and still, scarce turning a hair, trotted gallantly out the good hackney. But the evening grew darker, and it began to rain; a drizzling, perseverving rain, that wets a man through ere he is aware of it. After his fiftieth year, a gentleman, who has a tender regard for himself, does not like to get wet; and the rain inspired the banker, who was subject to rheumatism, with the resolution to take a short cut along the fields. There were one or two low hedges by this short way, but the banker had been there in the spring, and knew every inch of the ground. The hackney leaped easily—and the rider had a tolerably practised seat—and two miles saved might just prevent the menaced rheumatism; accordingly, our friend opened a white gate, and scoured along the fields without any misgiving as to the prudence of his choice. He arrived at his first leap—there was the hedge, its summit just discernible in the dim light. On the other side, to the right was a haystack, and close by this haystack seemed the most eligible place for clearing the obstacle. Now since the banker had visited this place, a deep ditch, that served as a drain, had been dug at the opposite base of the hedge, of which neither horse nor man was aware, so that the leap was far more perilous than was anticipated.

Unconscious of this additional obstacle, the rider set off in a canter. The banker was high in air, his loins bent back, his rein slackened, his right hand raised knowingly—when the horse took fright at an object crouched by the haystack—swerved, plunged midway into the ditch, and pitched its rider two or three yards over its head. The banker recovered himself sooner than might have been expected; and, finding himself, though bruised and shaken, still whole and sound, hastened to his horse. But the poor animal had not fared so well as its master, and its off-shoulder was either put out or dreadfully sprained. It had scrambled its way out of the ditch, and there it stood disconsolate by the hedge as lame as one of the trees that, at irregular intervals, broke the symmetry of the barrier. On ascertaining the extent of his misfortune, the banker became seriously uneasy: the rain increased—he was several miles yet from home—he was in the midst of houseless fields, with another leap before him—the leap he had just passed behind—and no other egress that he knew of into the main road. While these thoughts passed through his brain, he became suddenly aware that he was not alone. The dark object that

had frightened his horse rose slowly from the snug corner it had cccupied by the haystack, and a gruff voice that made the banker thrill to the marrow of his bones, cried, "Holla! who the devil are you?"

Lame as his horse was, the banker instantly put his foot into the stirrup; but before he could mount, a heavy gripe was laid on his shoulder—and turning round with as much fierceness as he could assume, he saw—what the tone of the voice had already led him to forebode—the ill-omened and cut-throat features of Luke Darvil.

"Ha! ha! my old annuitant, my clever feelosofer—jolly old boy—how are you?—give us a fist. Who would have thought to meet you on a rainy night, by a lone haystack, with a deep ditch on one side, and no chimney-pot within sight? Why, old fellow, I, Luke Darvil—I, the vagabond—I, whom you would have sent to the treadmill for being poor, and calling on my own daughter—I am as rich as you are, here—and as great, and as strong, and as powerful!"

And while he spoke, Darvil, who was really an undersized man, seemed to swell and dilate, till he appeared half a head taller than the shrinking banker, who was five feet eleven inches without his shoes.

"E—hem!" said the rich man, clearing his throat, which seemed to him uncommonly husky; "I do not know whether I insulted your poverty, my dear Mr. Darvil—I hope not; but this is hardly a time for talking—pray let me mount, and——"

"Not a time for talking!" interrupted Darvil, angrily; "it's just the time, to my mind: let me consider,—ay, I told you, that whenever we met by the roadside, it would be my turn to have the best of the argufying."

"I dare say—I dare say, my good fellow."

"Fellow not me!—I won't be fellowed now. I say I have the best of it here—man to man—I am your match."

"But why quarrel with me?" said the banker, coaxingly; "I never meant you harm, and I am sure you cannot mean me harm."

"No!—and why?" asked Darvil, coolly;—"why do you think I can mean you no harm?"

"Because your annuity depends on me."

"Shrewdly put—we'll argufy that point. My life is a bad one, not worth more than a year's purchase; now, suppose you have more than forty pounds about you—it may be better worth my while to draw my knife across your gullet than to wait for the quarter-day's ten pounds a-time. You see it's all a matter of calculation, my *dear* Mr. What's your name?"

"But," replied the banker, and his teeth began to chatter, "I have not forty pounds about me."

"How do I know that?—you say so. Well, in the town yonder, your word goes for more than mine; I never gainsayed you when you put that to me, did I? But here, by the haystack, my word is better than yours; and if I say you must and shall have forty pounds about you, let's see whether you dare contradict me!"

"Look you, Darvil," said the banker, summoning up all his energy and intellect, for his moral powers began now to back his physical cowardice, and he spoke calmly, and even bravely, through his heart throbbed aloud against his breast, and you might have knocked him down with a feather,—"the London runners are even now hot after you."

"Ha!—you lie!"

"Upon my honor I speak the truth; I heard the news last evening. They tracked you to C * * * * *—they tracked you out of the town; a word from me would have given you into their hands. I said nothing—you are safe—you may yet escape. I will even help you to fly the country, and live out your natural date of years, secure and in peace."

"You did not say that the other day in the snug drawing-room; you see I have the best of it now—own that."

"I do," said the banker.

Darvil chuckled, and rubbed his hands.

The man of wealth once more felt his importance, and went on. "This is one side of the question. On the other, suppose you rob and murder me; do you think my death will lessen the heat of the pursuit against you? The whole country will be in arms, and before forty-eight hours are over, you will be hunted down like a mad dog."

Darvil was silent, as if in thought; and, after a pause, replied—"Well, you are a 'cute one, after all. What have you got about you? you know you drove a hard bargain the other day—now it's my market—fustian has riz—kersey has fell."

"All I have about me shall be yours," said the banker, eagerly.

"Give it me, then."

"There!" said the banker, placing his purse and pocket-book into Darvil's hands.

"And the watch?"

"The watch?—well, there!"

"What's that?"

The banker's senses were sharpened by fear, but they were not so sharp as those of Darvil; he heard nothing but the rain pattering on the leaves, and the rush of water in the ditch at hand. Darvil stooped and listened—till, raising himself again with a deep-drawn breath, he said, "I think there are rats in the haystack; they will be running over me in my sleep; but they are playful creturs, and I like 'em. And now, my *dear* sir, I am afraid I must put an end to you!"

"Good Heavens! what do you mean! How!"

"Man, there is another world!" quoth the ruffiain, mimicking the banker's solemn tone in their former interview. "So much the better for you! In that world they don't tell tales."

"I swear I will never betray you."

"You do—swear it then."

"By all my hopes of earth and heaven!"

"What a d—d coward you be!" said Darvil, laughing scornfully. "Go—you are safe. I am in good humor with myself again. I crow over you, for no man can make *me* tremble. And villain as you think me, while you fear me you cannot despise—you respect me. Go, I say—go."

The banker was about to obey, when, suddenly, from the haystack, a broad, red light streamed upon the pair, and the next moment Darvil was seized from behind, and struggling in the gripe of a man nearly as powerful as himself. The light which came from a dark-lanthorn placed on the ground, revealed the forms of a peasant in a smock-frock, and two stout-built, stalwart men, armed with pistols—besides the one engaged with Darvil.

The whole of this scene was brought as by the trick of the stage—as by a flash of lightning—as by the change of a showman's phantasmagoria—before the astonished eyes of the banker. He stood arrested and spellbound, his hand on his bridle, his foot on his stirrup. A moment more and Darvil had dashed his antagonist on the ground; he stood at a little distance, his face reddened by the glare of the lanthorn, and fronting his assailants—that fiercest of all beasts, a desperate man at bay! He had already succeeded in drawing forth his pistols, and he held one in each hand—his eyes flashing from beneath his bent brows, and turning quickly from foe to foe! At last those terrible eyes rested on the late reluctant companion of his solitude.

"So *you* then betrayed me," he said, very slowly, and directed his pistol to the head of the dismounted horseman.

"No, no!" cried one of the officers, for such were Darvil's assailants; "fire away in this direction, my hearty—we're paid for it. The gentlemen knew nothing at all about it."

"Nothing, by G——!" cried the banker, startled out of his sanctity.

"Then I shall keep my shot," cried Darvil; "and mind, the first who approaches me is a dead man."

It so happened, that the robber and the officers were beyond the distance which allows sure mark for a pistol-shot, and each party felt the necessity of caution.

"Your time is up, my swell cove!" cried the head of the detachment; "you have had your swing, and a long one it seems to have been—you must now give in. Throw down your barkers, or we must make mutton of you, and rob the gallows."

Darvil did not reply, and the officers, accustomed to hold life cheap, moved on towards him—their pistols cocked and levelled.

Darvil fired—one of the men staggered and fell. With a kind of instinct, Darvil had singled out the one with whom he had before wrestled for life. The ruffian waited not for the others—he turned and fled along the fields.

"Zounds, he is off!" cried the other two, and they rushed after him in pursuit. A pause—a shot—another—an oath—a groan—and all was still.

"It's all up with him now! said one of the runners, in the distance; "he dies game."

At these words, the peasant, who had before skulked behind the haystack, seized the lanthorn from the ground, and ran to the spot. The banker involuntarily followed.

There lay Luke Darvil on the grass—still living, but a horrible and ghastly spectacle.

One ball had pierced his breast, another had shot away his jaw. His eyes rolled fearfully, and he tore up the grass with his hands.

The officers looked coldly on. "He was a clever fellow!" said one.

"And has given us much trouble, said the other; "let us see to Will."

"But he is not dead yet," said the banker, shuddering.

"Sir, he cannot live a minute."

Darvil raised himself bolt upright—shook his clenched fist at his conquerors, and a fearful gurgling howl, which the nature of his wound did not allow him to syllable into a curse, came from his breast—with that he fell flat on his back—a corpse.

"I am afraid, sir," said the elder officer, turning away, "you had a narrow escape—but how came you here?"

"Rather, how came *you* here?"

"Honest Hodge there, with the lanthorn, had marked the fellow skulk behind the hay-stack, when he himself was going out to snare rabbits. He had seen our advertisement of Watt's person, and knew that we were then at a public-house some miles off. He came to us—conducted us to the spot—we heard voices—showed up the glim—and saw our man. Hodge, you are a good subject, and love justice."

"Yees, but I shall have the rewourd," said Hodge, showing his teeth.

"Talk o' that by and by," said the officer. "Will, how are you, man?"

"Bad," groaned the poor runner, and a rush of blood from the lips followed the groan.

It was many days before the ex-member for C * * * * * sufficiently recovered the tone of his mind to think further of Alice; when he did, it was with great satisfaction that he reflected that Darvil was no more, and that the deceased ruffian was only known to the neighborhood by the name of Peter Watts.

BOOK FIFTH.

'Ο μουσποιὸς ἐνθαδ' Ἱππώναξ κεῖται.
Εἰ μὲν πονηρὸς, μὴ ποτέρχεν τῷ τύμβῳ·
Εἰ δ' ἐσσὶ κρήγυός τε καὶ παρὰ χρηστῶν
Θαρσέων καθίζεν· κἢν θέλῃς ἀνόβριξον.
THEOC. *Epig. in Hippon.*

PARODY.

My hero, turned author, lies mute in this section,
You may pass by the place if you're bored by reflection:
But if honest enough to be fond of the Muse,
Stay, and read where you're able, and sleep where you choose.

CHAPTER I.

* * * "My genius spreads her wing,
And flies where Britain courts the western spring.
* * * * *
Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by,
Intent on high designs."—GOLDSMITH.

I HAVE no respect for the Englishman who re-enters London after long residence abroad, without a pulse that beats quick, and a heart that heaves high. The public buildings are few, and, for the most part, mean; the monuments of antiquity, not comparable to those which the pettiest town in Italy can boast of; the palaces are sad rubbish; the houses of our peers and princes are shabby and shapeless heaps of brick. But what of all this? the spirit of London is in her thoroughfares—her population! What wealth—what cleanliness—what order—what animation! How majestic, and yet how vivid, is the life that runs through her myriad veins! How, as the lamps blaze upon you at night, and street after street glides by your wheels, each so regular in its symmetry, so equal in its civilization—how all speak of the CITY OF FREEMEN!

Yes, Maltravers felt his heart swell within him, as the post-horses whirled on his dingy carriage—over Westminster Bridge—along Whitehall—through Regent Street—towards one of the quiet and private-houselike hotels, that are scattered round the neighborhood of Grosvenor Square.

Ernest's arrival had been expected. He had writen from Paris to Cleveland to announce it; and Cleveland had, in reply, informed him that he had engaged apartments for him at Mivart's. The smiling waiters ushered him into a spacious and well-aired room—the arm-chair was already wheeled by the fire—a score or so of letters strewed the table, together with two of the Evening Papers. And how eloquently of busy England do those evening papers speak! A stranger might have felt that he wanted no friend to welcome him—the whole room smiled on him a welcome.

Maltravers ordered his dinner and opened his letters: they were of no importance; one from his steward, one from his banker, another about the County Races, a fourth from a man he had never heard of, requesting the vote and powerful interest of Mr. Maltravers for the county of B——, should the rumor of a dissolution be verified; the unknown candidate referred Mr. Maltravers to his "well-known public character." From these epistles Ernest turned impatiently, and perceived a little three-cornered note which had hitherto escaped his attention. It was from Cleveland, intimating that he was in town; that his health still precluded his going out, but that he trusted to see his dear Ernest as soon as he arrived.

Maltravers was delighted at the prospect of passing his evening so agreeably; he soon despatched his dinner and his newspapers, and walked in the brilliant lamplight of a clear

frosty evening of early December in London, to his friend's house in Curzon Street: a small house, bachelor-like, and unpretending; for Cleveland spent his moderate, though easy fortune, almost entirely at his country villa. The familiar face of the old valet greeted Ernest at the door, and he only paused to hear that his guardian was nearly recovered to his usual health, ere he was in the cheerful drawing-room, and—since Englishmen do not embrace—returning the cordial gripe of the kindly Cleveland.

"Well, my dear Ernest," said Cleveland, after they had gone through the preliminary round of questions and answers, "here you are at last: Heaven be praised; and how well you are looking—how much you are improved! It is an excellent period of the year for your *début* in London. I shall have time to make you intimate with people, before the whirl of 'the season' commences."

"Why, I thought of going to Burleigh, my country-place. I have not seen it since I was a child."

"No, no! you have had solitude enough at Como, if I may trust to your letter; you must now mix with the great London world; and you will enjoy Burleigh the more in the summer."

"I fancy this great London world will give me very little pleasure; it may be pleasant enough to young men just let loose from college, but your crowded ball-rooms and monotonous clubs will be wearisome to one who has grown fastidious before his time. *J'ai vécu beaucoup dans peu d'années.* I have drawn in youth too much upon the capital of existence, to be highly delighted with the ostentatious parsimony with which our great men economize pleasure."

"Don't judge before you have gone through the trial," said Cleveland: "there is something in the opulent splendor, the thoroughly sustained magnificence with which the leaders of English fashion conduct even the most insipid amusements, that is above contempt. Besides, you need not necessarily live with the butterflies. There are plenty of bees, that will be very happy to make your acquaintance. Add to this, my dear Ernest, the pleasure of being made of—of being of importance in your own country. For you are young, well-born, and sufficiently handsome to be an object of interest to mothers and to daughters; while your name and property, and interest, will make you courted by men who want to borrow your money and obtain your influence in your county. No, Maltravers, stay in London—amuse yourself your first year, and decide on your occupation and career the next: but reconnoitre before you give battle."

Maltravers was not ill pleased to follow his friend's advice, since by so doing he obtained his friend's guidance and society. Moreover, he deemed it wise and rational to see, face to face, the eminent men in England with whom, if he fulfilled his promise to De Montaigne, he was to run the race of honorable rivalry. Accordingly, he consented to Cleveland's propositions.

"And have you," said he, hesitating, as he loitered by the door after the stroke of twelve had warned him to take his leave—"have you never heard anything of my—my—the unfortunate Alice Darvil?"

"Who?—Oh, that poor young woman; I remember?—not a syllable."

Maltravers sighed deeply, and departed.

CHAPTER II.

"Je trouve que c'est une folie de vouloir étudier le monde en simple spectateur. * * Dans l'école du monde, comme dans cette de l'amour, il faut commencer par pratiquer ce qu'on veut apprendre."

—ROUSSEAU.*

ERNEST MALTRAVERS was now fairly launched upon the wide ocean of London. Amongst his other property was a house in Seamore Place—that quiet, yet central street, which enjoys the air, without the dust, of the Park. It had been hitherto let, and the tenant now quitting very opportunely, Maltravers was delighted to secure so pleasant a residence, for he was still romantic enough to desire to look out upon trees and verdure rather than brick houses. He indulged only in two other luxuries: his love of music tempted him to an opera-box, and he had that English feeling which prides itself in the possession of beauti-

* I find that it is a folly to wish to study the world like a simple spectator. * * * In the school of the world, as in that of love, it is necessary to begin by practising what we wish to learn.

ful horses,—a feeling that enticed him into an extravagance on this head that baffled the competition and excited the envy of much richer men. But four thousand a-year goes a great way with a single man who does not gamble, and is too philosophical to make superfluities wants.

The world doubled his income, magnified his old country-seat into a supurb château, and discovered that his elder brother, who was only three or four years older than himself, had no children. The world was very courteous to Ernest Maltravers.

It was, as Cleveland said, just at that time of year when people are at leisure to make new acquaintances. A few only of the difficult houses in town were open; and their doors were cheerfully expanded to the accomplished ward of the popular Cleveland. Authors, and statesmen, and orators, and philosophers—to all he was presented;—all seemed pleased with him, and Ernest became the fashion before he was conscious of the distinction. But he had rightly foreboded. He had commenced life too soon; he was disappointed; he found some persons he could admire, some whom he could like, but none with whom he could grow intimate, or for whom he could feel an interest. Neither his heart nor his imagination was touched; all appeared to him like artificial machines; he was discontented with things like life, but in which something or other was wanting. He more than ever recalled the brilliant graces of Valerie de Vantadour, which had thrown a charm over the most frivolous circles; he even missed the perverse and fantastic vanity of Castruccio. The mediocre poet seemed to him at least less mediocre than the worldings about him. Nay, even the selfish good spirits and dry shrewdness of Lumley Ferrers would have been acceptable change to the dull polish and unrelieved egotism of jealous wits and party politicians. "If these are the flowers of the parterre, what must be the weeds?" said Maltravers to himself, returning from a party at which he had met half a score of the most orthodox lions.

He began to feel the aching pain of satiety.

But the winter glided away: the season commenced, and Maltravers was whirled on with the rest into the bubbling vortex.

CHAPTER III.

"And crowds commencing mere vexation,
Retirement sent its invitation."—SHENSTONE.

THE tench, no doubt, considers the pond in which he lives as the Great World. There is no place, however stagnant, which is not the great world to the creatures that move about in it. People who have lived all their lives in a village still talk of the world as if they had ever seen it! An old woman in a hovel does not put her nose out of her door on a Sunday without thinking she is going amongst the pomps and vanities of the great world. Ergo, the great world is to all of us the little circle in which we live. But as fine people set the fashion, so the circle of fine people is called the Great World, *par excellence*. Now this great world is not a bad thing when we thoroughly understand it; and the London great world is at least as good as any other. But, then, we scarcely *do* understand that or anything else in our *beaux jours*,—which, if they are sometimes the most exquisite, are also often the most melancholy and the most wasted portion of our life. Maltravers had not yet found out either *the set* that pleased him or the species of amusement that really amused. Therefore he drifted on and about the vast whirlpool, making plenty of friends,—going to balls and dinners—and bored with both, as men are who have no object in society.

Now the way society is enjoyed is to have a pursuit, a *métier* of some kind, and then to go into the world, either to make the individual object a social pleasure, or to obtain a reprieve from some toilsome avocation. Thus if you are a politician—politics at once make an object in your closet, and a social tie between others and yourself when you are in the world. The same may be said of literature, though in a less degree; and though, as fewer persons care about literature than politics, your companions must be more select. If you are very young, you are fond of dancing; if you are very profligate, perhaps you are fond of flirtations with your friend's wife. These last are objects in their way: but they don't last long, and, even with the most frivolous, are not occupations that satisfy the whole mind and heart, in which there is generally an aspiration

after something useful. It is not vanity alone that makes a man of the *mode* invent a new bit, or give his name to a new kind of carriage; it is the influence of that mystic yearning after utility, which is one of the master-ties between the individual and the species.

Maltravers was not happy—that is a lot common enough; but he was not amused—and that is a sentence more insupportable. He lost a great part of his sympathy with Cleveland, for, when a man is not amused, he feels an involuntary contempt for those who are. He fancies they are pleased with trifles which his superior wisdom is compelled to disdain. Cleveland was of that age when we generally grow social—for by being rubbed long and often against the great loadstone of society, we obtain, in a thousand little minute points, an attraction in common with our fellows. Their petty sorrows and small joys—their objects of interest or employment, at some time or other have been ours. We gather up a vast collection of moral and mental farthings of exchange; and we scarcely find any intellect too poor, but what we can deal with it in some way. But in youth, we are egotists and sentamentalists, and Maltravers belonged to the fraternity who employ

"The heart in passion and the head in rhymes."

At length—just when London begins to grow most pleasant—when flirtations become tender, and water parties numerous—when birds sing in the groves of Richmond, and white-bait refresh the statesman by the shores of Greenwich,—Maltravers abruptly fled from the gay metropolis, and arrived one lovely evening in July, at his own ivy-grown porch of Burleigh.

What a soft, fresh, delicious evening it was? He had quitted his carriage at the lodge, and followed it across the small but picturesque park alone and on foot. He had not seen the place since childhood—he had quite forgotten its aspect. He now wondered how he could have lived anywhere else. The trees did not stand in stately avenues, nor did the antlers of the deer wave above the sombre fern; it was not the domain of a grand seigneur, but of an old, long-descended English squire. Antiquity spoke in the moss-grown palings, in the shadowy groves, in the sharp gable-ends and heavy mullions of the house, as it now came in view, at the base of a hill covered with wood and partially veiled by the shrubs of the neglected pleasure-ground, separated from the park by the invisible ha-ha. There, gleamed in the twilight the watery face of the oblong fish-pool, with its old-fashioned willows at each corner—there, grey, and quaint, was the monastic dial—and there was the long terrace-walk, with discolored and broken vases, now filled with the orange or the aloe, which, in honor of his master's arrival, the gardener had extracted from the dilapidated green-house. The very evidence of neglect around, the very weeds and grass on the half-obliterated road, touched Maltravers with a sort of pitying and remorseful affection for his calm and sequestered residence. And it was not with his usual proud step and erect crest that he passed from the porch to the solitary library, through a line of his servants:—the two or three old retainers belonging to the place were utterly unfamiliar to him, and they had no smile for their stranger lord.

CHAPTER IV.

"*Lucian.* He that is born to be a man, neither should nor can be anything nobler, greater, and better than a man.

"*Peregrine.* But, good Lucian, for the very reason that he may not become less than a man, he should be always striving to be more."

—WIELAND'S *Peregrinus Proteus.*

IT was two years from the date of the last chapter before Maltravers again appeared in general society. These two years had sufficed to produce a revolution in his fate. Ernest Maltravers had lost the happy rights of the private individual; he had given himself to the Public; he had surrendered his name to men's tongues, and was a thing that all had a right to praise, to blame, to scrutinize, to spy. Ernest Maltravers had become an author.

Let no man tempt Gods and Columns, without weighing well the consequences of his experiment. He who publishes a book, attended with a moderate success, passes a mighty barrier. He will often look back with a sigh of regret at the land he has left for ever. The beautiful and decent obscurity of hearth and home is gone. He can no longer feel the just indignation of manly pride when

he finds himself ridiculed or reviled. He has parted with the shadow of his life. His motives may be misrepresented, his character belied; his manners, his person, his dress, the "very trick of his walk," are all fair food for the cavil and the caricature.

He can never go back, he cannot even pause; he has chosen his path, and all the natural feelings that make the nerve and muscle of the active being, urge him to proceed. To stop short is to fail. He has told the world that he will make a name; and he must be set down as a pretender, or toil on till the boast be fulfilled. Yet Maltravers thought nothing of all this when, intoxicated with his own dreams and aspirations, he desired to make a world his confidant; when from the living Nature, and the lore of books, and the mingled resnlt of inward study and external observation, he sought to draw forth something that might interweave his name with the pleasurable associations of his kind. His easy fortune and lonely state gave him up his own thoughts and contemplations; they suffused his mind, till it ran over upon the page which makes the channel that connects the soltiary Fountain with the vast Ocean of Human Knowledge. The temperament of Maltravers was, as we have seen, neither irritable nor fearful. He formed himself, as a sculptor forms, with a model before his eyes, and an ideal in his heart. He endeavored, with labor and patience, to approach nearer and nearer with every effort to the standard of such excellence as he thought might ultimately be attained by a reasonable ambition; and when, at last, his judgment was satisfied, he surrendered the product with a tranquil confidence to a more impartial tribunal.

His first work was successful; perhaps from this reason—that it bore the stamp of the Honest and the Real. He did not sit down to report of what he had never seen, to dilate on what he had never felt. A quiet and thoughtful observer of life, his descriptions were the more vivid, because his own first impressions were not yet worn away. His experience had sunk deep; not on the arid surface of matured age, but in the fresh soil of youthful emotions. Another reason, perhaps, that obtained success for his essay was, that he had more varied and more elaborate knowledge than young authors think it necessary to possess. He did not, like Cesarini, attempt to make a show of words upon a slender capital of ideas. Whether his style was eloquent or homely, it was still in him a faithful transcript of considered and digested thought. A third reason—and I dwell on these points not more to elucidate the career of Maltravers, than as hints which may be useful to others—a third reason why Maltravers obtained a prompt and favorable reception from the public was, that he had not hackneyed his peculiarities of diction and thought in that worst of all schools for the literary novice—the columns of a magazine. Periodicals form an excellent mode of communication between the public and an author *already* established, who has lost the charm of novelty, but gained the weight of acknowledged reputation; and who, either upon politics or criticism, seeks for frequent and continuous occasions to enforce his peculiar theses and doctrines. But, upon the young writer, this mode of communication, if too long continued, operates most injuriously both as to his future prospects and his own present taste and style. With respect to the first, it familiarizes the public to his mannerism (and all writers worth reading have mannerism) in a form to which the said public are not inclined to attach much weight. He forestalls in a few months what ought to be the effect of years; namely, the wearying a world soon nauseated with the *toujours perdrix*. With respect to the last, it induces a man to write for momentary effects; to study a false smartness of style and reasoning; to bound his ambition of durability to the last day of the month; to expect immediate returns for labor: to recoil at the "hope deferred" of serious works on which judgment is slowly formed. The man of talent who begins young at periodicals, and goes on long, has generally something crude and stunted about both his compositions and his celebrity. He grows the oracle of small coteries; and we can rarely get out of the impression that he is cockneyfied and conventional. Periodicals sadly mortgaged the claims that Hazlitt, and many others of his contemporaries, had upon a vast reversionary estate of Fame. But I here speak too politically; to some, the *res augustæ domi* leave no option. And, as Aristotle and the Greek proverb have it, we cannot carve out all things with the knife of the Delphic cutler.

The second work that Maltravers put forth, at an interval of eighteen months from the first, was one of a graver and higher nature: it served to confirm his reputation; and that is success enough for a second work, which is usually an author's "*pons asinorum.*" He who, after a triumphant first book, does not dissatisfy the public with a second, has a fair chance of gaining a fixed station in literature. But now commenced the pains and perils of the after-birth. By a maiden effort an author rarely makes enemies. His fellow-writers are not yet prepared to consider him as a rival; if he be tolerably rich, they unconsciously trust that he will not become a regular, or, as they term it, "a professional" author: he did something just to be talked of; he may write no more, or his second book may fail. But when the second book comes out, and does not fail they begin to look about them; envy wakens, malice begins. And all the old school—gentlemen who have retired on their pensions of renown—regard him as an intruder: then the sneer, then the frown, the caustic irony, the biting review, the depreciating praise. The novice begins to think that he is further from the goal than before he set out upon the race.

Maltravers had, upon the whole, a tolerably happy temperament; but he was a very proud man, and he had the nice soul of a courageous, honoroble, punctilious gentleman. He thought it singular that society should call upon him, as a gentleman, to shoot his best friend, if that friend affronted him with a rude word; and yet that, as an author, every fool and liar might, with perfect impunity, cover reams of paper with the most virulent personal abose of him.

It was one evening in the early summer that, revolving anxious and doubtfnl thoughts, Ernest sauntered gloomily along his terrace,

"And watched with wistful eyes the setting sun,"

when he perceived a dusty travelling carriage whirled along the road by the ha-ha, and a hand waved in recognition from the open window. His guests had been so rare, and his friends were so few, that Maltravers could not conjecture who was his intended visitant. His brother, he knew was in London. Cleveland, from whom he had that day heard, was at his villa. Ferrers was enjoying himself in Vienna. Who could it be? We may say of solitude what we please; but, after two years of solitude, a visitor is a pleasurable excitement. Maltravers retraced his steps, entered his house, and was just in time to find himself almost in the arms of De Montaigne.

CHAPTER V.

"* * Quid tam dextro pede concipis ut te,
Conatûs non pœniteat, votique peracti?"*—Juv.

"Yes," said De Montaigne, "in my way *I* also am fulfilling my destiny. I am a member of the *Chambre de Députés*, and on a visit to England upon some commercial affairs. I found myself in your neighborhood, and, of course, could not resist the temptation: so you must receive me as your guest for some days."

"I congratulate you cordially on your senatorial honors. I have already heard of your rising name."

"I return the congratulations with equal warmth. You are bringing my prophecies to pass. I have read your works with increased pride at our friendship."

Maltravers sighed slightly, and half turned away.

"The desire of distinction," said he, after a pause, "grows upon us till excitement becomes disease. The child who is born with the Mariner's instinct laughs with glee when his paper bark skims the wave of a pool. By-and-by, nothing will content him but the ship and the ocean.—Like the child is the author."

"I am pleased with your simile," said De Montaigne, smiling. "Do not spoil it, but go on with your argument."

Maltravers continued—"Scarcely do we win the applause of a moment ere we summon the past and conjecture the future. Our contemporaries no longer suffice for competitors, our age for the Court to pronounce on our claims: we call up the Dead as our only true rivals—we appeal to Posterity as our sole just tribunal. Is this vain in us? Possibly. Yet such vanity humbles. 'Tis then only we learn all the difference between Reputation and Fame—between To-Day and Immortality!"

"Do you think," replied De Montaigne,

* What under such happy auspices do you conceive, that you may not repent of your endeavor and accomplished wish?

"that the dead did not feel the same, when they first trod the path that leads to the life beyond life? Continue to cultivate the mind, to sharpen by exercise the genius, to attempt to delight or to instruct your race; and even supposing you fall short of every model you set before you—supposing your name moulder with your dust, still you will have passed life more nobly than the unlaborious herd. Grant that you win not that glorious accident, 'a name below,' how can you tell but what you may have fitted yourself for high destiny and employ in the world not of men, but of spirits? The powers of the mind are things that cannot be less immortal than the mere sense of identity; their acquisitions accompany us through the Eternal Progress; and we may obtain a lower or a higher grade hereafter, in proportion as we are more or less fitted by the exercise of our intellect to comprehend and execute the solemn agencies of God. The wise man is nearer to the angels than the fool is. This may be an apocryphal dogma, but it is not an impossible theory."

"But we may waste the sound enjoyments of actual life in chasing the hope you justly allow to be 'apocryphal;' and our knowledge may go for nothing in the eyes of the Omniscient."

"Very well," said De Montaigne, smiling; "but answer me honestly. By the pursuits of intellectual ambition, *do* you waste the sound enjoyments of life? If so, you do not pursue the system rightly. Those pursuits ought only to quicken your sense for such pleasures as are the true relaxations of life. And this, with your peculiarly, since you are fortunate enough not to depend for subsistence upon literature; did you do so, I might rather advise you to be a trunkmaker than an author. A man ought not to attempt any of the highest walks of Mind and Art, as the mere provision of daily bread; not literature alone, but everything else of the same degree. He ought not to be a statesman, or an orator, or an philosopher, as a thing of pence and shillings; and usually all men, save the poor poet, feel this truth insensibly."

"This may be fine preaching," said Maltravers; "but you may be quite sure that the pursuit of literature is a pursuit apart from the ordinary objects of life, and you cannot command the enjoyments of both."

"I think otherwise," said Montaigne; "but it is not in a country-house eighty miles from the capital, without wife, guests, or friends, that the experiment can be fairly made. Come, Maltravers, I see before you a brave career, and I cannot permit you to halt at the onset."

"You do not see all the calumnies that are already put forth against me, to say nothing of all the assurances (and many by clever men) that there is nothing in me!"

"Dennis was a clever man, and said the same thing of your Pope. Madame de Sévigné was a clever woman, but she thought Racine would never be very famous.—Milton saw nothing in the first efforts of Dryden that made him consider Dryden better than a rhymester. Aristophanes was a good judge of poetry, yet how ill he judged of Euripides! But all this is commonplace, and yet you bring arguments that a commonplace answers in evidence against yourself."

"But it is unpleasant not to answer attacks—not to retaliate on enemies."

"Then answer attacks, and retaliate on enemies."

"But would that be wise?"

"If it give you pleasure—it would not please *me*."

"Come, De Montaigne, you are reasoning Socratically. I will ask you plainly and bluntly, would you advise an author to wage war on his literary assailants, or to despise them?"

"Both; let him attack but few and those rarely. But it is his policy to show that he is one whom it is better not to provoke too far. The author always has the world on his side against the critics, if he choose his opportunity. And he must always recollect that he is 'A STATE' in himself, which must sometimes go to war in order to procure peace. The time for war or for peace must be left to the State's own diplomacy and wisdom."

"You would make us political machines."

"I would make every man's conduct more or less mechanical; for system is the triumph of mind over matter; the just equilibrium of all the powers and passions may seem like machinery. Be it so. Nature meant the world—the creation—man himself, for machines."

"And one must even be in a passion mechanically, according to your theories."

"A man is a poor creature who is not in a

passion sometimes; but a very unjust, or a very foolish one, if he be in a passion with the wrong person, and in the wrong place and time. But enough of this, it is growing late."

"And when will Madame visit England?"

"Oh, not yet, I fear. But you will meet Cesarini in London this year or next. He is persuaded that you did not see justice done to his poems, and is coming here, as soon as his indolence will let him, to proclaim your treachery in a biting preface to some toothless satire."

"Satire!"

"Yes; more than one of your poets made their way by a satire, and Cesarini is persuaded he shall do the same. Castruccio is not as far sighted as his namesake, the Prince of Lucca. Good night my dear Ernest."

CHAPTER VI.

"When with much pains this boasted learning 's got,
'Tis an affront to those who have it not."
—CHURCHILL: *The Author.*

THERE was something in De Montaigne's conversation, which, without actual flattery, reconciled Maltravers to himself and his career. It served less, perhaps, to excite than to sober and brace his mind. De Montaigne could have made no man rash, but he could have made many men energetic and perservering. The two friends had some points in common; but Maltravers had far more prodigality of nature and passion about him—had more of flesh and blood, with the faults and excellencies of flesh and blood. De Montaigne held so much to his favorite doctrine of moral epuilibrium, that he had really reduced himself, in much, to a species of clock-work. As impulses are formed from habits, so the regularity of De Montaigne's habits made his impulses virtuous and just, and he yielded to them as often as a hasty character might have done; but then those impulses never urged to anything speculative or daring. De Montaigne could not go beyond a certain defined circle of action. He had no sympathy for any reasonings based purely on the hypotheses of the imagination: he could not endure Plato, and he was dumb to the eloquent whispers of whatever was refining in poetry or mystical in wisdom.

Maltravers, on the contrary, not disdaining Reason, ever sought to assist her by the Imaginative Faculty, and held all philosophy incomplete and unsatisfactory that bounded its inquiries to the limits of the Known and Certain. He loved the inductive process; but he carried it out to Conjecture as well as Fact. He maintained that, by a similar hardihood, all the triumphs of science, as well as art, had been accomplished—that Newton, that Copernicus, would have done nothing if they had not imagined as well as reasoned, guessed as well as ascertained. Nay, it was an aphorism with him that the very soul of philosophy is conjecture. He had the most implicit confidence in the operations of the mind and the heart properly formed, and deemed that the very excesses of emotion and thought, in men well trained by experience and study, are conducive to useful and great ends. But the more advanced years, and the singularly practical character of De Montaigne's views gave him a superiority in argument over Maltravers, which the last submitted to unwillingly. While, on the other hand, De Montaigne secretly felt that his young friend reasoned from a broader base, and took in a much wider circumference; and that he was, at once, more liable to failure and error, and more capable of new discovery and of intellectual achievement.

But their ways in life being different, they did not clash; and De Montaigne, who was sincerely interested in Ernest's fate, was contented to harden his friend's mind against the obstacles in his way, and leave the rest to experiment and to Providence. They went up to London together: and De Montaigne returned to Paris. Maltravers appeared once more in the haunts of the gay and great. He felt that his new character had greatly altered his position. He was no longer courted and caressed for the same vulgar and adventitious circumstances of fortune, birth, and connections, as before—yet for circumstances that to him seemed equally unflattering. He was not sought for his merit, his intellect, his talents; but for his momentary celebrity. He was an author in fashion, and run after as anything else in fashion might have been. He was invited, less to be talked to than to be stared at. He was far too proud in his temper, and too pure in his ambition, to feel his

vanity elated by sharing the enthusiasm of the circles with a German prince or an industrious flea. Accordingly he soon repelled the advances made to him, was reserved and supercilious to fine ladies, refused to be the fashion, and became very unpopular with the literary exclusives.

They even began to run down the works, because they were dissatisfied with the author. But Maltravers had based his experiments upon the vast masses of the general Public. He had called the PEOPLE of his own and other countries to be his audience and his judges; and all the coteries in the world could not have injured him. He was like the member for an immense constituency, who may offend individuals, so long as he keep his footing with the body at large. But while he withdrew himself from the insipid and the idle, he took care not to become separated from the world. He formed his own society according to his tastes: took pleasure in the manly and exciting topics of the day; and sharpened his observation and widened his sphere as an author, by mixing freely and boldly with all classes as a citizen. But literature became to him as art to the artist—as his mistress to the lover—an engrossing and passionate delight. He made it his glorious and divine profession—he loved it *as* a profession—he devoted to its pursuits and honors his youth, cares, dreams—his mind, and his heart, and his soul. He was a silent but intense enthusiast in the priesthood he had entered. From LITERATURE he imagined had come all that makes nations enlightened and men humane. And he loved Literature the more, because her distinctions were not those of the world—because she had neither ribands, nor stars, nor high places at her command.

A name in the deep gratitude and hereditary delight of men—this was the title she bestowed. Hers was the Great Primitive Church of the world, without Popes or Muftis—sinecures, pluralities, and hierachies. Her servants spoke to the earth as the prophets of old, anxious only to be heard and believed. Full of this fanaticism, Ernest Maltravers pursued his way in the great procession of the myrtle bearers to the sacred shrine. He carried the thyrsus, and he believed in the god. By degrees his fanaticism worked in him the philosophy which De Montaigne would have derived from sober calculation; it made him indifferent to the thorns in the path, to the storms in the sky. He learned to despise the enmity he provoked, the calumnies that assailed him. Sometimes he was silent, but sometimes he retorted. Like a soldier who serves a cause, he believed that when the cause was injured in his person, the weapons confided to his hands might be wielded without fear and without reproach. Gradually he became feared as well as known. And while many abused him, none could contemn.

It would not suit the design of this work to follow Maltravers step by step in his course. I am only describing the principal events, not the minute details, of his intellectual life. Of the character of his works it will be enough to say, that whatever their faults, they were original—they were his own. He did not write according to copy, nor compile from common-place-books. He was an artist, it is true,—for what is genias itself but art? but he took laws, and harmony, and order, from the great code of Truth and Nature; a code that demands intense and unrelaxing study—though its first principles are few and simple: that study Maltravers did not shrink from. It was a deep love of truth that made him a subtle and searching analyst, even in what the dull world considers trifles; for he knew that nothing in literature is in itself trifling—that it is often but a hair's breadth that divides a truism from a discovery.

He was the more original because he sought rather after the True than the New. No two minds are ever the same; and therefore any man who will give us fairly and frankly the results of his own impressions. uninfluenced hy the servilities of imitation, will be original. But it was not from originality, which really made his predominant merit, that Maltravers derived his reputation, for his originality was not of that species which generally dazzles the vulgar—it was not extravagant nor *bizarre*—he affected no system and no school. Many authors of this day seemed more novel and *unique* to the superficial. Profound and durable invention proceeds by subtle and fine gradations—it has nothing to do with those jerks and starts, those convulsions and distortions, which belong not to the vigor and health, but to the epilepsy and disease, of Literature.

CHAPTER VII.

"Being got out of town, the first thing I did was to give my mule her head."—*Gil Blas.*

ALTHOUGH the character of Maltravers was gradually becoming more hard and severe,—although as his reason grew more muscular, his imagination lost something of its early bloom, and he was already very different from the wild boy who had set the German youths in a blaze, and had changed into a Castle of Indolence the little cottage, tenanted with Poetry and Alice,—he still preserved many of his old habits; he loved, at frequent intervals, to disappear from the great world—to get rid of books and friends, and luxury and wealth, and make solitary excursions, sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, through this fair garden of England.

It was one soft May-day that he found himself on such an expedition, slowly riding through one of the green lanes of ——shire. His cloak and his saddle-bags comprised all his baggage, and the world was before him "where to choose his place of rest." The lane wound at length into the main road, and just as he came upon it, he fell in with a gay party of equestrians.

Foremost of this cavalcade rode a lady in a dark green habit, mounted on a thorough-bred English horse, which she managed with so easy a grace that Maltravers halted in involuntary admiration. He himself was a consummate horseman, and he had the quick eye of sympathy for those who shared the accomplishment. He thought, as he gazed, that he had never seen but one woman, whose air and mien on horseback was so full of that nameless elegance which skill and courage in any art naturally bestow—that woman was Valerie de Ventadour. Presently, to his great surprise, the lady advanced from her companions, neared Maltravers, and said, in a voice which he did not at first distinctly recognize—"Is it possible!—do I see Mr. Maltravers?"

She paused a moment, and then threw aside her veil, and Ernest beheld—Madame de Ventadour! By this time a tall, thin gentleman had joined the Frenchwoman.

"Has *madame* met with an acquaintance?" said he; "and if so, will she permit me to partake her pleasure?"

The interruption seemed a relief to Valerie; she smiled and colored.

"Let me introduce you to Mr. Maltravers. Mr. Maltravers, this is my host, Lord Doningdale."

The two gentlemen bowed, the rest of the cavalcade surrounded the trio, and Lord Doningdale, with a stately yet frank courtesy, invited Maltravers to return with the party to his house, which was about four miles distant. As may be supposed, Ernest readily accepted the invitation. The cavalcade proceeded, and Maltravers hastened to seek an explanation from Valerie. It was soon given. Madame de Ventadour had a young sister, who had lately marrried a son of Lord Doningdale. The marriage had been solemnized in Paris, and Monsieur and Madame de Ventadour had been in England a week on a visit to the English peer.

The *rencontre* was so sudden and unexpected, that neither recovered sufficient self-possession for fluent conversation. The explanation given, Valerie sank into a thoughtful silence, and Maltravers rode by her side equally taciturn, pondering on the strange chance which, after the lapse of years, had thrown them again together.

Lord Doningdale, who at first lingered with his other visitors, now joined them, and Maltravers was struck with his highbred manner and a singular and somewhat elaborate polish in his emphasis and expression. They soon entered a noble park, which attested far more care and attention than are usually bestowed upon those demesnes, so peculiarly English. Young plantations everywhere contrasted the venerable groves—new cottages of picturesque design adorned the outskirts—and obelisks and columns, copied from the antique, and evidently of recent workmanship, gleamed upon them as they neared the house—a large pile, in which the fashion of Queen Anne's day had been altered in the French roofs and windows of the architecture of the Tuileries.

"You reside much in the country, I am sure, my lord," and Maltravers.

"Yes," replied Lord Doningdale, with a pensive air, "this place is greatly endeared to me. Here his Majesty Louis XVIII., when in England, honored me with an annual visit. In compliment to him, I sought to model my poor mansion into an humble likeness of his

own palace, so that he might, as little as possible, miss the rights he had lost. His own rooms were furnished exactly like those he had occupied at the Tuileries. Yes, the place is endeared to me—I think of the old times with pride. It is something to have sheltered a Bourbon in his misfortunes."

"It cost *milord* a vast sum to make these alterations," said Madame de Ventadour, glancing archly at Maltravers.

"Ah, yes," said the old lord; and his face, lately elated, became overcast—"nearly three hundred thousand pounds: but what then?—'*Les souvenirs, madame, sont sans prix!*"

"Have you visited Paris since the Restoration, Lord Doningdale?" asked Maltravers.

His lordship looked at him sharply, and then turned his eye to Madame de Ventadour.

"Nay," said Valerie, laughing, "I did not dictate the question."

"Yes," said Lord Doningdale, "I have been at Paris."

"His Majesty must have been delighted to return your lordship's hospitality."

Lord Doningdale looked a little embarrassed, and made no reply, but put his horse into a canter.

"You have galled our host," said Valerie, smiling. "Louis XVIII. and his friends lived here as long as they pleased and as sumptuously as they could; their visits half ruined the owner, who is the model of a *gentilhomme* and *preux chevalier*. He went to Paris to witness their triumph; he expected, I fancy, the order of the St. Esprit. Lord Doningdale has royal blood in his veins. His Majesty asked him once to dinner, and when he took leave, said to him, 'We are happy, Lord Doningdale, to have *thus* requited our obligations to your lordship.' Lord Doningdale went back in dudgeon, yet he still boasts of his *souvenirs*, poor man!"

"Princes are not grateful, neither are republics," said Maltravers.

"Ah! who is grateful," rejoined Valerie, "except a dog and a woman?"

Maltravers found himself ushered into a vast dressing-room, and was informed by a French valet, that, in the country, Lord Doningdale dined at six—the first bell would ring in a few minutes. While the valet was speaking, Lord Doningdale himself entered the room. His lordship had learned, in the meanwhile, that Maltravers was of the great and ancient commoners' house, whose honors were centered in his brother; and yet more, that he was the Mr. Maltravers whose writings every one talked of, whether for praise or abuse. Lord Doningdale had the two characteristics of a high-bred gentleman of the old school—respect for birth and respect for talent; he was, therefore, more than ordinarily courteous to Ernest, and pressed him to stay some days with so much cordiality, that Maltravers could not but assent. His travelling toilet was scanty; but Maltravers thought little of dress.

CHAPTER VIII.

"It is the soul that sees. The outward eyes
Present the object, but the mind descries:
And thence delight, disgust, or cold indifference rise."
—CRABBE.

WHEN Maltravers entered the enormous saloon, hung with damask, and decorated with the ponderous enrichments and furniture of the time of Louis XIV. (that most showy and barbarous of all tastes, which has nothing in it of the graceful, nothing of the picturesque, and which, now-a-days, people who should know better imitate with a ludicrous servility),—he found sixteen persons assembled. His host stepped up from a circle which surrounded him, and formally presented his new visitor to the rest. He was struck with the likeness which the sister of Valerie bore to Valerie herself; but it was a sobered and chastened likeness—less handsome, less impressive. Mrs. George Herbert—such was the name she now owned, was a pretty, shrinking, timid girl, fond of her husband, and mightily awed by her father-in-law. Maltravers sate by her, and drew her into conversation. He could not help pitying the poor lady, when he found she was to live altogether at Doningdale Park—remote from all her friends and habits of her childhood—alone, so far as the affections were concerned, with a young husband, who was passionately fond of field sports, and who, from the few words Ernest exchanged with him, seemed to have only three ideas—his dogs, his horses, and his wife.

Alas! the last would soon be the least in importance. It is a sad position—that of a

lively young Frenchwoman, entombed in an English country-house! Marriages with foreigners are seldom fortunate experiments! But Ernest's attention was soon diverted from the sister by the entrance of Valerie herself, leaning on her husband's arm. Hitherto he had not very minutely observed what change time had effected in her—perhaps he was half afraid. He now gazed at her with curious interest. Valerie was still extremely handsome, but her face had grown sharper, her form thinner and more angular; there was something in her eye and lip, discontented, restless, almost querulous:—such is the too common expression in the face of those born to love, and condemned to be indifferent. The little sister was more to be envied of the two—come what may, she loved her husband, such as he was, and her heart might ache, but it was not with a void.

Monsieur de Ventadour soon shuffled up to Maltravers—his nose longer than ever.

"Hein—hein—how d'ye do—how d'ye do?—charmed to see you—saw madame before me—hein—hein—I suspect—I suspect——"

"Mr. Maltravers, will you give Madame de Ventadour your arm?" said Lord Domingdale, as he stalked on to the dining-room with a duchess on his own.

"And you have left Naples," said Maltravers: "left it for good?"

"We do not think of returning."

"It was a charming place—how I loved it!—how well I remember it!" Ernest spoke calmly,—it was but a general remark.

Valerie sighed gently.

During dinner the conversation between Maltravers and Madame de Ventadour was vague and embarrassed. Ernest was no longer in love with her—he had outgrown that youthful fancy. She had exercised influence over him—the new influences that he had created, had chased away her image. Such is life. Long absences extinguish all the false lights, though not the true ones. The lamps are dead in the banquet-room of yesterday; but a thousand years hence and the stars we look on to-night will burn as brightly. Maltravers was no longer in love with Valerie. But Valerie—Ah, perhaps *hers* had been true love!

Maltravers was surprised when he came to examine the state of his own feelings—he was surprised to find that his pulse did not beat quicker at the touch of one whose very glance had once thrilled him to the soul—he was surprised, but rejoiced. He was no longer anxious to seek but to shun excitement, and he was a better and a higher being than he had been on the shores of Naples.

CHAPTER IX.

"Whence that low voice, a whisper from the heart,
That told of days long past?"—WORDSWORTH.

ERNEST stayed several days at Lord Domingdale's, and every day he rode out with Valerie, but it was with a large party; and every evening he conversed with her, but the whole world might have overheard what they said. In fact, the sympathy that had once existed between the young dreamer and the proud, discontented woman, had in much passed away. Awakened to vast and grand objects, Maltravers was a dreamer no more. Inured to the life of trifles she had once loathed, Valerie had settled down into the usages and thoughts of the common world—she had no longer the superiority of earthly wisdom over Maltravers, and his romance was sobered in its eloquence, and her ear dulled to its done. Still Ernest felt a deep interest in her, and still she seemed to feel a sensitive pride in his career.

One evening Maltravers had joined a circle in which Madame de Ventadour, with more than her usual animation, presided—and to which, in her pretty, womanly, and thoroughly French way, she was lightly laying down the law on a hundred subjects — Philosophy, Poetry, Sévres china and the Balance of Power in Europe. Ernest listened to her, delighted, but not enchanted. Yet Valerie was not natural that night—she was speaking from forced spirits.

"Well," said Madame de Ventadour at last, tired, perhaps, of the part she had been playing, and bringing to a sudden close an animated description of the then French court—"well, see now if we ought not to be ashamed of ourselves—our talk has positively interrupted the music. Did you see Lord Domingdale stop it with a bow to me, as much as to say, with his courtly reproof,—'It shall not

disturb you, madam?' I will no longer be accessary to your crime of bad taste!"

With this the Frenchwoman rose and gliding through the circle, retired to the further end of the room. Ernest followed her with his eyes. Suddenly she beckoned to him, and he approached and seated himself by her side.

"Mr. Maltravers," said Valerie, then, with great sweetness in her voice,—"I have not yet expressed to you the delight I have felt from your genius. In absence you have suffered me to converse with you—your books have been to me dear friends; as we shall soon part again, let me now tell you of this, frankly and without compliment."

This paved the way to a conversation that approached more on the precincts of the past, than any they had yet known. But Ernest was guarded, and Valerie watched his words and looks with an interest she could not conceal—an interest that partook of disappointment.

"It is an excitement," said Valerie, "to climb a mountain, though it fatigue; and though the clouds may even deny us a prospect from its summit,—it is an excitement that gives a very universal pleasure, and that seems almost as if it were the result of a common human instinct, which makes us desire to rise—to get above the ordinary thoroughfares and level of life. Some such pleasure you must have in intellectual ambition, in which the mind is the upward traveller."

"It is not the *ambition* that pleases," replied Maltravers; "it is the following a path congenial to our tastes, and made dear to us in a short time by habit. The moments in which we look beyond our work, and fancy ourselves seated beneath the Everlasting Laurel, are few. It is the work itself, whether of action or literature, that interests and excites us. And at length the dryness of toil takes the familiar sweetness of custom. But in intellectual labor there is another charm—we become more intimate with our own nature. The heart and the soul grow friends, as it were, and the affections and aspirations unite. Thus, we are never without society—we are never alone; all that we have read, learned and discovered, is company to us. This is pleasant," added Maltravers, "to those who have no dear connections in the world without."

"And is that your case?" asked Valerie, with a timi-

"Alas, yes! and since I conquered one affection, Madame de Ventadour, I almost think I have outlived the capacity of loving. I believe that when we cultivate very largely the reason or the imagination, we blunt to a certain extent, our young susceptibilities to the fair impressions of real life. From 'idleness,' says the old Roman poet, 'Love feeds his torch."

"You are too young to talk thus."

"I speak as I feel."

Valerie said no more.

Shortly afterwards Lord Doningdale approached them, and proposed that they should make an excursion the next day to see the ruins of an old abbey, some few miles distant.

CHAPTER X.

"If I should meet thee
After long years,
How shall I greet thee?"—BYRON.

IT was a smaller party than usual the next day, consisting only of Lord Doningdale, his son George Herbert, Valerie and Ernest. They were returning from the ruins, and the sun, now gradually approaching the west, threw its slant rays over the gardens and houses of a small, picturesque town, or, perhaps, rather village, on the high North Road. It is one of the prettiest places in England, that town or village, and boasts an excellent old-fashioned inn, with a large and quaint pleasure-garden. It was through the long and straggling street that our little party slowly rode, when the sky became suddenly overcast, and a few large hailstones falling, gave notice of an approaching storm.

"I told you we should not get safely through the day," said George Herbert. "Now we are in for it."

"George that is a vulgar expression," said Lord Doningdale, buttoning up his coat. While he spoke a vivid flash of lightening darted across their very path, and the sky grew darker and darker.

"We may as well rest at the inn," said Maltravers; "the storm is coming on apace, and Madame de Ventadour——"

"You are right," interrupted Lord Doningdale; and he put his horse into a canter.

They were soon at the door of the old hotel. Bells rang—dogs barked—hostlers ran. A plain, dark, travelling post-chariot was before the inn-door; and, roused perhaps by the noise below, a lady in the first floor front, No. 2," came to the window. This lady owned the travelling carriage, and was at this time alone in that apartment. As she looked carelessly at the party, her eyes rested on one form—she turned pale, uttered a faint cry, and fell senseless on the floor.

Meanwhile, Lord Doningdale and his guests were shown into the room next to that tenanted by the lady. Properly speaking, both the rooms made one long apartment for balls and county meetings, and the division was formed by a thin partition, removable at pleasure. The hail now came on fast and heavy, the trees groaned, the thunder roared; and in the large, dreary room there was a palpable and oppressive sense of coldness and discomfort. Valerie shivered—a fire was lighted—and the French-woman drew near to it.

"You are wet, my dear lady," said Lord Doningdale. "You should take off that close habit, and have it dried."

"Oh, no; what matters it?" said Valerie, bitterly, and almost rudely.

"It matters everything, said Ernest; "pray be ruled."

"And do you care for me?" murmured Valerie.

"Can you ask that question?" replied Ernest, in the same tone, and with affectionate and friendly warmth.

"Meanwhile, the good old lord had summoned the chambermaid, and, with the kindly imperiousness of a father, made Valerie quit the room. The three gentlemen, left together, talked of the storm, wondered how long it would last, and debated the propriety of sending to Doningdale for the carriage. While they spoke, the hail suddenly ceased, though clouds in the distant horizon were bearing heavily up to renew the charge. George Herbert, who was the most impatient of mortals, especially of rainy weather in a strange place, seized the occasion, and insisted on riding to Doningdale, and sending back the carriage.

"Surely a groom would do as well, George," said the father.

"My dear father, no; I should envy the rogue too much. I am bored to death here. Marie will be frightened about us. Brown Bess will take me back in twenty minutes. I am a hardy fellow, you know. Good-bye."

Away darted the young sportsman, and in two minutes they saw him spur gaily from the inn-door.

"It is very odd that *I* should have such a son," said Lord Doningdale, musingly—"a son who cannot amuse himself in-doors for two minutes together. I took great pains with his education, too. Strange that people should weary so much of themselves that they cannot brave the prospect of a few minutes passed in reflection—that a shower and the resources of their own thoughts are evils so galling—very strange, indeed. But it is a confounded climate this, certainly. I wonder when it will clear up."

Thus muttering, Lord Doningdale walked, or rather marched, to and fro the room, with his hands in his coat pockets, and his whip sticking perpendicularly out of the right one. Just at this moment the waiter came to announce that his lordship's groom was without, and desired much to see him. Lord Doningdale had then the pleasure of learning that his favorite grey hackney which he had ridden, winter and summer, for fifteen years, was taken with shivers, and, as the groom expressed it, seemed to have "the collar [cholera?] in its bowels!"

Lord Doningdale turned pale, and hurried to the stables without saying a word.

Maltravers, who, plunged in thought, had not overheard the low and brief conference between master and groom, remained alone, seated by the fire, his head buried in his bosom, and his arms folded.

Meanwhile, the lady, who occupied the adjoining chamber, had recovered slowly from her swoon. She put both hands to her temples, as if trying to re-collect her thoughts. Hers was a fair, innocent, almost childish face; and now, as a smile shot across it, there was something so sweet and touching in the gladness it shed over that countenance, that you could not have seen it without strong and almost painful interest. For it was the gladness of a person who has known sorrow! Suddenly she started up, and said—"No—then! I do not dream. He is come back—he is here—all will be well again! Ha! it is his voice. Oh, bless him,

it is *his* voice!" She paused, her finger on her lip, her face bent down. A low and indistinct sound of voices reached her straining ear through the thin door that divided her from Maltravers. She listened intently, but she could not overhear the import. Her heart beat violently. "He is not alone!" she murmured, mournfully. "I will wait till the sound ceases, and then I will venture in!"

And what was the conversation carried on in that chamber? We must return to Ernest. He was sitting in the same thoughtful posture when Madame de Ventadour returned. The Frenchwoman colored when she found herself alone with Ernest, and Ernest himself was not at his ease.

"Herbert has gone home to order the carriage, and Lord Doningdale has disappeared, I scarce know whither. You do not, I trust, feel the worse for the rain?"

"No," said Valerie.

"Shall you have any commands in London?" asked Maltravers; "I return to town to-morrow."

"So soon!" and Valerie sighed. "Ah!" she added, after a pause, "we shall not meet again for years, perhaps. Monsieur de Ventadour is to be appointed ambassador to the ——— Court—and so—and so. . . . . Well, it is no matter. What has become of the friendship we once swore to each other?"

"It is here," said Maltravers, laying his hand on his heart. "Here, at least, lies the half of that friendship which was my charge; and more than friendship, Valerie de Ventadour—respect—admiration—gratitude. At a time of life, when passion and fancy, most strong, might have left me an idle and worthless voluptuary, you convinced me that the world has virtue, and that woman is too noble to be our toy—the idol of to-day, the victim of to-morrow. Your influence, Valerie, left me a more thoughtful man—I hope a better one."

"Oh!" said Madame de Ventadour, strongly affected; "I bless you for what you tell me: you cannot know—you cannot guess how sweet it is to me. Now I recognize you once more. What—what did my resolution cost me? Now I am repaid!"

Ernest was moved by her emotion, and by his own remembrances; he took her hand, and pressing it with frank and respectful tenderness—"I did not not think, Valerie," said he, "when I reviewed the past, I did not think that you loved me—I was not vain enough for that; but, if so, how much is your character raised in my eyes—how provident, how wise your virtue! Happier and better for both, our present feelings, each to each, than if we had indulged a brief and guilty dream of passion at war with all that leaves passion without remorse, and bliss without alloy. Now——"

"Now!" interruptcd Valerie, quickly, and fixing on him her dark eyes—"now you love me no longer! Yes, it is better so. Well, I will go back to my cold and cheerless state of life, and forget once more that Heaven endowed me with a heart!"

"Ah, Valerie! esteemed, revered, still beloved, not indeed with the fires of old, but with a deep, undying, and holy tenderness, speak not thus to me. Let me not believe you unhappy; let me think that, wise, sagacious, brilliant as you are, you have employed your gifts, to reconcile yourself to a common lot. Still let me look up to you when I would despise the circles in which you live, and say,—'On that pedestal an altar is yet placed, to which the heart may bring the offerings of the soul.'"

"It is in vain—in vain that I struggle," said Valerie, half-choked with emotion, and clasping her hands passionately. "Ernest, I love you still—I am wretched to think you love me no more; I would give you nothing—yet I exact all; my youth is going—my beauty dimmed—my very intellect is dulled by the life I lead; and yet I ask from you that which your young heart once felt for me. Despise me, Maltravers, I am not what I seemed—I am a hypocrite—despise me."

"No," said Ernest, again possessing himself of her hand, and falling on his knee by her side. "No, never to be forgotten, ever to be honored Valerie, hear me." As he spoke, he kissed the hand he held; with the other, Valerie covered her face and wept bitterly, but in silence. Ernest paused till the burst of her feelings had subsided, her hand still in his—still warmed by his kisses—kisses as pure as cavalier ever impressed on the hand of his queen.

At that time, the door communicating with the next room gently opened. A fair form—a form fairer and younger than that of Valerie de Ventadour, entered the apartment; the

silence had deceived her—she believed that Maltravers was alone. She had entered with her heart upon her lips; love, sanguine, hopeful love, in every vein, in every thought—she had entered, dreaming that across that threshold life would dawn upon her afresh—that all would be once more as it had been, when the common air was rapture. Thus she entered; and now she stood spellbound, terror-stricken, pale as death—life turned to stone—youth—hope—bliss were for ever over to her! Ernest kneeling to another was all she saw! —For this had she been faithful and true, amidst storm and desolation; for this had she hoped—dreamed—lived. They did not note her; she was unseen—unheard. And Ernest, who would have gone bare-foot to the end of the earth to find her, was in the very room with her, and knew it not!

"Call me again *beloved!*" said Valerie, very softly.

"Beloved Valerie, hear me!

These words were enough for the listener; she turned noiselessly away: humble as that heart was, it was proud. The door closed on her—she had obtained the wish of her whole being—Heaven had heard her prayer—she had once more seen the lover of her youth; and thenceforth all was night and darkness to her. What matter what became of her? One moment, what an affect it produces upon years! —ONE MOMENT!—virtue, crime, glory, shame, woe, rapture, rest upon moments! Death itself is but a moment, yet Eternity is its successor!

"Hear me!" continued Ernest, unconscious of what had passed—"hear me; let us be what human nature and worldly forms seldom allow those of opposite sexes to be—friends to each other, and to virtue also—friends through time and absence—friends through all the vicissitudes of life—friends on whose affection shame and remorse never cast a shade—friends who are to meet hereafter! Oh! there is no attachment so true, no tie so holy, as that which is founded on the old chivalry of loyalty and honor; and which is what love would be, if the heart and the soul were unadulterated by clay."

There was in Ernest's countenance an expression so noble, in his voice a tone so thrilling, that Valerie was brought back at once to the nature which a momentary weakness had subdued. She looked at him with an admiring and grateful gaze, and then said, in a calm but low voice, "Ernest, I understand you; yes, your friendship is dearer to me than love."

At this time they heard the voice of Lord Doningdale on the stairs. Valerie turned away. Maltravers, as he rose, extended his hand; she pressed it warmly, and the spell was broken, the temptation conquered, the ordeal passed. While Lord Doningdale entered the room, the carriage, with Herbert in it, drove to the door. In a few minutes the little party were within the vehicle. As they drove away, the hostlers were harnessing the horses to the dark green travelling carriage. From the window, a sad and straining eye gazed upon the gayer equipage of the peer—that eye which Maltravers would have given his whole fortune to meet again. But he did not look up; and Alice Darvil turned away, and her fate was fixed!

CHAPTER XI.

"Strange fits of passion I have known,
And I will dare to tell."—WORDSWORTH.

"* * * The food of hope
Is meditated action."—WORDSWORTH

MALTRAVERS left Doningdale the next day. He had no further conversation with Valerie; but when he took leave of her, she placed in his hand a letter, which he read as he rode slowly through the beech avenues of the park. Translated, it ran thus:—

"Others would despise me for the weakness I showed—but you will not! It is the sole weakness of a life. None can know what I have passed through—what hours of dejection and gloom—I, whom so many envy! Better to have been a peasant girl, with love, than a queen whose life is but a dull mechanism. You, Maltravers, I never forgot in absence; and your image made yet more wearisome and trite the things around me. Years passed, and your name was suddenly in men's lips. I heard of you wherever I went—I could not shut you from me. Your fame was as if you were conversing by my side. We met at last, suddenly and unexpectedly. I saw that you loved me no more, and that thought conquered all my resolves: anguish subdues the nerves of the mind as sickness those of the body. And thus I forgot, and humbled, and might have undone myself. Juster and better thoughts are once more awakened within me, and when we meet again I shall be worthy of your respect. I see how dangerous are that luxury of thought, that sin of discontent which I indulged. I go back to life resolved

to vanquish all that can interfere with its claims and duties. Heaven guide and preserve you, Ernest! Think of me as one whom you will not blush to have loved—whom you will not blush hereafter to present to your wife. With so much that is soft, as well as great within you, you were not formed like me—to be alone.

"FAREWELL!"

Maltravers read, and re-read this letter; and when he reached his home, he placed it carefully amongst the things he most valued. A lock of Alice's hair lay beside it—he did not think that either was dishonored by the contact.

With an effort, he turned himself once more to those stern, yet high connections which literature makes with real life, Perhaps there was a certain restlessness in his heart which induced him ever to occupy his mind. That was one of the busiest years of his life—the one in which he did most to sharpen jealousy and confirm fame.

CHAPTER XII.

"In effect he entered my apartment."—*Gil Blas.*

"I am surprised, said he, at the caprice of fortune, who sometimes delights in loading an execrable author with favors, whilst she leaves good writers to perish for want."—*Gil Blas.*

IT was just twelve months after his last interview with Valerie, and Madame de Ventadour had long since quitted England, when one morning, as Maltravers sat alone in his study, Castruccio Cesarini was announced.

"Ah, my dear Castruccio, how are you?" cried Maltravers, eagerly, as the opening door presented the form of the Italian.

"Sir," said Castruccio, with great stiffness, and speaking in French, which was his wont when he meant to be distant—"sir,, I do not come to renew our former acquaintance—you are a great man [here a bitter sneer], I an obscure one—[here Castruccio drew himself up]—I only come to discharge a debt to you which I find I have incurred."

"What tone is this, Castruccio; and what debt do you speak of?"

"On my arrival in town yesterday," said the poet, solemnly, "I went to the man who you deputed some years since to publish my little volume, to demand an account of its success; and I found that it had cost one hundred and twenty pounds, deducting the sale of forty-nine copies which had been sold. *Your* books sell some thousands, I am told. It is well contrived—mine fell still-born, no pains were taken with it—no matter—[a wave of the hand]. You discharged this debt, I repay you; there is a check for the money. Sir, I have done! I wish you a good day, and health to enjoy *yaur* reputation."

"Why, Cesarini, this is folly."

"Sir——"

"Yes, it is folly; for there is no folly equal to that of throwing away friendship in a world where friendship is so rare. You insinuate that I am to blame for any neglect which your work experienced. Your publisher can tell you that I was more anxious about your book than I have ever been about my own."

"And the proof is, that forty-nine copies were sold!"

"Sit down, Castruccio; sit down and listen to reason;" and Maltravers proceeded to explain, and soothe, and console. He reminded the poor poet that his verses were written in a foreign tongue,—that even English poets of great fame enjoyed but a limited sale for their works—that it was impossible to make the avaricious public purchase what the stupid public would not take an interest in—in short, he used all those arguments which naturally suggested themselves as best calculated to convince and soften Castruccio: and he did this with so much evident sympathy and kindness, that at length the Italian could could no longer justify his own resentment. A reconciliation took place, sincere on the part of Maltravers, hollow on the part of Cesarini; for the disappointed author could not forgive the successful one.

"And how long shall you stay in London?"

"Some months."

"Send for your luggage, and be my guest."

"No; I have taken lodgings that suit me. I am formed for solitude."

"While you stay here, you will, however, go into the world."

"Yes, I have some letters of introduction, and I hear that the English can honor merit, even in an Italian."

"You hear the truth, and it will amuse you at least to see our eminent men. They will receive you most hospitably. Let me assist you as a cicerone."

"Oh, your *valuable* time!"——

"Is at your disposal; but where are you going?"

"It is Sunday, and I have had my curiosity excited to hear a celebrated preacher, Mr. ——, who, they tell me, is now more talked of than *any author* in London."

"They tell you truly—I will go with you—I myself have not yet heard him; but proposed to do so this very day."

"Are you not jealous of a man so much spoken of?"

"Jealous —why I never set up for a popular preacher!—*ce n'est pas mon métier.*"

"If I were a *successful* author, I should be jealous if the dancing-dogs were talked of."

"No, my dear Cesarini, I am sure you would not. You are a little iritated at present by natural disappointment! but the man who has as much success as he deserves, is never morbidly jealous, even of a rival in his own line: want of success sours us; but a little sunshine smiles away the vapors. Come, we have no time to lose."

Maltravers took his hat, and the two young men bent their way to ——— chapel. Cesarini still retained the singular fashion of his dress, though it was now made of handsomer materials, and worn with more coxcombry and pretension. He had much improved in person—had been admired in Paris, and told that he looked like a man of genius—and with his black ringlets flowing over his shoulders, his long moustache, his broad Spanish-shaped hat, and eccentric garb, he certainly did not look like other people. He smiled with contempt at the plain dress of his companion. "I see," said he, "that you follow the fashion, and look as if you pased your life with *élégans* instead of students. I wonder you condescend to such trifles as fashionably-shaped hats and coats."

"It would be worse trifling to set up for originality in hats and coats, at least in sober England. I was born a gentleman, and I dress my outward frame like others of my order. Because I am a writer, why should I affect to be different from other men?"

"I see that you are not above the weakness of your countryman, Congreve," said Cesarini, "who deemed it finer to be a gentleman than an author."

"I always thought that anecdote misconstrued. Cougreve had a proper and manly pride, to my judgment, when he expressed a dislike to be visited merely as a raree-show."

"But is it policy to let the world see that an author is like other people? Would he not create a deeper personal interest if he showed that even in person alone he was unlike the herd? He ought to be seen seldom—not to stale his presence—and to resort to the arts that belong to the royalty of intellect as well as the royalty of birth."

"I dare say an author, by a little charatanism of that nature, might be more talked of—might be more adored in the boarding-schools, and make a better picture in the exhibition. But I think, if his mind be manly, he would lose in self-respect at every quackery of the sort. And my philosophy is, that to respect one's self is worth all the fame in the world."

Cesarini sneered and shrugged his shoulders; it was quite evident that the two authors had no sympathy with each other.

They arrived at last at the chapel, and with some difficulty procured seats.

Presently the service began. The preacher was a man of unquestionable talent and fervid eloquence; but his theatrical arts, his affected dress, his artificial tones and gestures, and, above all, the fanatical mummeries which he introduced into the House of God, disgusted Maltravers, while they charmed, entranced, and awed Cesarini. The one saw a mountebank and impostor—the other recognized a profound artist and an inspired prophet.

But while the discourse was drawing towards a close, while the preacher was in one of his most eloquent bursts—the ohs! and ahs! of which were the grand prelude to the pathetic peroration—the dim outline of a female form, in the distance, riveted the eyes and absorbed the thoughts of Maltravers. The chapel was darkened, though it was broad daylight; and the face of the person that attracted Ernest's attention was concealed by her head-dress and veil. But that bend of the neck, so simply graceful, so humbly modest, recalled to his heart but one image. Every one has, perhaps, observed that there is a physiognomy (if the bull may be pardoned) of *form* as well as face, which it rarely happens that two persons possess in common. And this, with most, is peculiarly marked in the turn of the head, the outline of the shoulders, and the ineffable

something that characterizes the postures of each individual in repose.

The more intently he gazed, the more firmly Ernest was persuaded that he saw before him the long-lost, the never-to-be-forgotten mistress of his boyish days, and his first love. On one side of the lady in question sate an elderly gentleman, whose eyes were fixed upon the preacher; on the other, a beautiful little girl, with long fair ringlets, and that cast of features which, from its exquisite delicacy and expressive mildness, painters and poets call the "angelic." These persons appeared to belong to the same party. Maltravers literally trembled, so great were his impatience and agitation. Yet still, the dress of the supposed likeness of Alice, the appearance of her companions, were so evidently above the ordinary rank, that Earnest scarcely ventured to yield to the suggestions of his own heart. Was it possible that the daughter of Luke Darvil, thrown upon the wide world, could have risen so far beyond her circumstances and station? At length, the moment came when he might resolve his doubts—the discourse was concluded—the extemporaneous prayer was at an end—the congregation broke up, and Maltravers pushed his way, as well as he could, through the dense and serried crowd. But every moment some vexatious obstruction, in the shape of a fat gentleman or three close-wedged ladies, intercepted his progress. He lost sight of the party in question amidst the profusion of tall bonnets and waving plumes. He arrived at last, breathless, and pale as death, (so great was the struggle within him), at the door of the chapel. He arrived in time to see a plain carriage with servants in grey undress liveries, driving from the porch—and caught a glimpse, within the vehicle, of the golden ringlets of a child. He darted forward, he threw himself almost before the horses. The coachman drew in, and with an angry exclamation, very much like an oath, whipped his horses aside and went off. But that momentary pause sufficed.—"It is she—it is! O heaven, it is Alice!" murmured Maltravers. The whole place reeled before his eyes, and he clung, overpowered and unconconscious to a neighboring lamp-post for support. But he recovered himself with an agonizing effort, as the thought struck upon his heart, that he was about to lose sight of her again for ever. And he rushed forward, like one frantic, in pursuit of the carriage. But there was a vast crowd of other carriages, besides stream upon stream of foot-passengers,—for the great and the gay resorted to that place of worship, as a fashionable excitement in a dull day. And after a weary and a dangerous chase, in which he had been nearly run over three times, Maltavers halted at last, exhausted and in despair. Every succeeding Sunday, for months, he went to the same chapel, but in vain; in vain, too, he resorted to every public haunt of dissipation and amusement. Alice Darvil he beheld no more!

CHAPTER XIII

"Tell me, sir,
Have you cast up your state, rated your land,
And find it able to endure the charge?"
—*The Noble Gentleman.*

By degrees, as Maltravers sobered down from the first shock of that unexpected meeting, and from the prolonged disappointment that followed it, he became sensible of a strange kind of happiness or contentment. Alice was not in poverty, she was not eating the unhallowed bread of vice, or earning the bitter wages of laborious penury. He saw her in reputable, nay opulent circumstances. A dark nightmare, that had often, amidst the pleasures of youth, or the triumphs of literature, weighed upon his breast, was removed. He breathed more freely—he could sleep in peace. His conscience could no longer say to him, "She who slept upon thy bosom is a wanderer upon the face of the earth—exposed to every temptation, perishing perhaps for want." That single sight of Alice had been like the apparition of the injured Dead conjured up at Heraclea—whose sight could pacify the aggressor and exorcise the spectres of remorse. He was reconciled with himself, and walked on to the Future with a bolder step and a statelier crest. Was she married to that staid and sober-looking personage whom he had beheld with her? was that child the offspring of their union? He almost hoped so—it was better to lose than to destroy her. Poor Alice! could she have dreamed, when she sat at his feet gazing up into his

eyes, that a time would come when Maltravers would thank Heaven for the belief that she was happy with another?

Ernest Maltravers now felt a new man; the relief of conscience operated on the efforts of his genius. A more buoyant and elastic spirit entered into them—they seemed to breathe as with a second youth.

Meanwhile Cesarini threw himself into the fashionable world, and to his own surprise was *fêted* and caressed. In fact, Castruccio was exactly the sort of person to be made a lion of. The letters of introduction that he had brought from Paris were addressed to those great personages in England, between whom and personages equally great in France politics makes a bridge of connection. Cesarini appeared to them as an accomplished young man, brother-in-law to a distinguished member of the French Chamber. Maltravers, on the other hand, introduced him to the literary dilettanti, who admire all authors that are not rivals. The singular costume of Cesarini, which would have revolted persons in an Englishman, enchanted them in an Italian. He looked, they said, like a poet. Ladies like to have verses written to them,—and Cesarini, who talked very little, made up for it by scribbling eternally. The young man's head soon grew filled with comparisons between himself in London and Petrarch at Avignon. As he had always thought that fame was in the gift of lords and ladies, and had no idea of the multitude he fancied himself already famous. And since one of his strongest feelings was his jealousy of Maltravers, he was delighted at being told he was a much more interesting creature than that haughty personage, who wore his neckcloth like other people, and had not even those indipensable attributes of genius—black curls and a sneer. Fine society which, as Madame de Staël well says, depraves the frivolous mind and braces the strong one, completed the ruin of all that was manly in Cesarini's intellect. He soon learned to limit his desire of effect or distinction to gilded saloons; and his vanity contented itself upon the scraps and morsels from which the lion heart of true ambition turns in disdain. But this was not all. Cesarini was envious of the greater affluence of Maltravers. His own fortune was in a small capital of eight or nine thousand pounds; but, thrown in the midst of the wealthiest society in Europe, he could not bear to sacrifice a single claim upon its esteem. He began to talk of the satiety of wealth, and young ladies listened to him with remarkable interest when he did so—he obtained the reputation of riches—he was too vain not to be charmed with it. He endeavored to maintain the claim by adopting the extravagant excesses of the day. He bought horses—he gave away jewels—he made love to a marchioness of forty-two who was very kind to him and very fond of *écarté*—he gambled—he was in the high road to destruction.

BOOK SIXTH.

Εἰκοις ἄν, ὡς ὁ χρυσὸς ἐκ νικᾷ τάδε
Πλουτεῖν τε τερπνόν.—EURIP. *Ion.*, line 641.

Perchance you say that gold's the arch-exceller,
And to be rich is sweet?

* * * κεῖνο δ' οὐκ ἀνασχετόν
Εἴκειν ὁδοῦ χαλῶντα τοῖς κακίοσιν.—*Ibid.*, line 643.

* * * 'Tis not to be endured,
To yield our trodden path and turn aside,
Giving our place to knaves.

CHAPTER I.

"L'adresse et l'artifice ont passé dans mon cœur,
Qu'on a sous cet habit et d'esprit et de ruse." *
—REGNARD.

IT was a fine morning in July, when a gentleman who had arrived in town the night before—after an absence from England of several years—walked slowly and musingly up that superb thoroughfare which connects the Regent's Park with St. James's.

He was a man who, with great powers of mind, has wasted his youth in a wandering vagabond kind of life, but who had worn away the love of pleasure, and begun to awaken to a sense of ambition.

"It is astonishing how this city is improved," said he to himself. "Everything gets on in this world with a little energy and bustle—and everybody as well as everything. My old cronies, fellows not half so clever as I am, are all doing well. There's Tom Stevens, my very fag at Eton—snivelling little dog he was too!—just made under-secretary of state. Pearson, whose longs and shorts I always wrote, is now head-master to the human longs and shorts of a public school—editing Greek plays, and booked for a bishopric. Collier, I see, by the papers, is leading his circuit—and Ernest Maltravers (but *he* had some talent!) has made a name in the world. Here am I, worth them all put together, who have done nothing but spend half my little fortune in spite of all my economy. Egad, this must have an end. I must look to the main chance; and yet, just when I want his help the most, my worthy uncle thinks fit to marry again. Humph—I'm too good for this world."

While thus musing, the soliloquist came in direct personal contact with a tall gentleman, who carried his head very high in the air, and did not appear to see that he had nearly thrown our abstracted philosopher off his legs.

"Zounds, sir, what do you mean!" cried the latter.

"I beg your par——" began the other, meekly, when his arm was seized, and the injured man exclaimed, "Bless me, sir, is it indeed *you* whom I see?"

"Ha!—Lumley?"

"The same; and how fares it, my dear uncle? I did not know you were in London. I only arrived last night. How well you are looking!"

"Why, yes, Heaven be praised, I am pretty well."

"And happy in your new ties? You must present me to Mrs. Templeton."

"Ehem," said Mr. Templeton, clearing his throat, and with a slight but embarassed smile, "I never thought I should marry again."

"*L'homme propose et Dieu dispose*," observed Lumley Ferrers; for it was he.

* Subtlety and craft have taken possession of my heart, but under this habit one exhibits both shrewdness and wit.

"Gently, my dear nephew," replied Mr. Templeton, gravely; "those phrases are somewhat sacrilegious: I am an old-fashioned person, you know."

"Ten thousand apologies."

"*One* apology will suffice; these hyperboles of phrase are almost sinful."

"Confounded old prig!" thought Ferrers; but he bowed sanctimoniously.

"My dear uncle, I have been a wild fellow in my day; but with years comes reflection; and, under your guidance, if I may hope for it, I trust to grow a wiser and a better man."

"It is well, Lumley," returned the uncle; "and I am very glad to see you returned to your own country. Will you dine with me to-morrow? I am living near Fulham. You had better bring your carpet-bag, and stay with me some days; you will be heartily welcome, especially if you can shift without a foreign servant. I have a great compassion for papists, but——"

"Oh, my dear uncle, do not fear; I am not rich enough to have a foreign servant, and have not travelled over three quarters of the globe without learning that it is possible to dispense with a valet."

"As to being rich enough," observed Mr. Templeton, with a calculating air, "seven hundred and ninty-five pounds ten shillings a year will allow a man to keep *two* servants, if he pleases; but I am glad to find you economical, at all events. We meet to-morrow, then, at six o'clock."

"*Au revoir*—I mean, God bless you."

"Tiresome old gentleman that," muttered Ferrers, "and not so cordial as formerly; perhaps his wife is *enceinte*, and he is going to do me the injustice of having another heir. I must look to this; for without riches I had better go back and live *au cinquième* at Paris."

With this conclusion Lumley quickened his pace, and soon arrived in Seamore Place. In a few moments more he was in the library well stored with books, and decorated with marble busts and images from the studios of Canova and Thorwaldsen.

"My master, sir, will be down immediately," said the servant who admitted him; and Ferrers threw himself on a sofa, and contemplated the apartment with an air half-envious and half cynical.

Presently the door opened, and "My dear Ferrers!" "Well, *mon cher*, how are you?" were the salutations hastily exchanged.

After the first sentences of inquiry, gratulation, and welcome, had cleared the way for more general conversation, "Well, Maltravers," said Ferrers, "so here we are together again, and after a lapse of so many years! both older, certainly; and you, I suppose, wiser. At all events, people think you so; and that's all that's important in the question. Why, man, you are looking as young as ever, only a little paler and thinner: but look at me; I am not very *much* past thirty, and I am almost an old man; bald at the temples, crows' feet, too, eh! Idleness ages one damnably."

"Pooh, Lumley, I never saw you look better. And are you really come to settle in England?"

"Yes, if I can afford it. But at my age, and after having seen so much, the life of an idle, obscure *garçon*, does not content me. I feel that the world's opinion, which I used to despise, is growing necessary to me. I want to be something. What can I be? Don't look alarmed, I won't rival you. I dare say literary reputation is a fine thing, but I desire some distinction, more substantial and worldly. You know your own country; give me a map of the roads to Power."

"To power! Oh, nothing but law, politics, and riches."

"For law I am too old; politics, perhaps, might suit me; but riches, my dear Ernest—ah, how I long for a good account with my banker!"

"Well, patience and hope. Are you not a rich uncle's heir?"

"I don't know," said Ferrers, very dolorously; "the old gentleman has married again, and may have a family."

"Married!—to whom?"

"A widow, I hear; I know nothing more, except that she has a child already. So you see she has got into a cursed way of having children. And, perhaps, by the time I'm forty, I shall see a whole covey of cherubs flying away with the great Templeton property!"

"Ha, ha! your despair sharpens your wit, Lumley; but why not take a leaf out of your uncle's book, and marry yourself?"

"So I will when I can find an heiress. If that is what you meant to say—it is a more sensible suggestion than any I could have sup-

posed to come from a man who writes books, especially poetry; and your advice is not to be despised. For rich I will be; and as the fathers (I don't mean of the Church, but in Horace) told the rising generation the first thing is to resolve to be rich, it is only the second thing to consider how."

"Meanwhile, Ferrers, you will be my guest."

"I'll dine with you to-day; but to-morrow I am off to Fulham, to be introduced to my aunt. Can't you fancy her?"—grey gros de Naples gown; gold chain with an eyeglass; rather fat; two pugs and a parrot! 'Start not, this is fancy's sketch!" I have not yet seen the respectable relative with my physical optics. What shall we have for dinner? Let *me* choose, you were always a bad caterer."

As Ferrers thus rattled on, Maltravers felt himself growing younger; old times and old adventures crowded fast upon him; and the two friends spent a most agreeable day together. It was only the next morning that Maltravers, in thinking over the various conversations that had passed between them, was forced reluctantly to acknowledge that the inert selfishness of Lumley Ferrers seemed now to have hardened into a resolute and systematic want of principle, which might, perhaps, make him a dangerous and designing man, if urged by circumstances into action.

CHAPTER II.

"*Dauph.* Sir, I must speak to you. I have been long your despised kinsman.

"*Morose.* O, what thou wilt, nephew."—EPICENE.

"Her silence is dowry eno'—exceedingly soft spoken thrifty of her speech, that spends but six words a-day."
—*Ibid.*

THE coach dropped Mr. Ferrers at the gate of a villa about three miles from town. The lodge-keeper charged himself with the carpet-bag, and Ferrers strolled, with his hands behind him, (it was his favorite mode of disposing of them), through the beautiful and elaborate pleasure-grounds.

"A very nice, snug, little box, (jointure-house, I suppose)! I would not grudge that, I'm sure, if I had but the rest. But here, I suspect, comes madam's first specimen of the art of having a family." This last thought was extracted from Mr. Ferrer's contemplative brain by a lovely little girl, who came running up to him, fearless and spoilt as she was; and, after indulging a tolerable stare, exclaimed "Are you come to see papa, sir?"

"Papa!—the deuce!" thought Lumley; "and who is papa, my dear?"

"Why, mamma's husband. He is not my papa by rights."

"Certainly not, my love; not by rights—I comprehend."

"Eh!"

"Yes, I am going to your papa by wrongs—Mr. Templeton."

"Oh, this way, then."

"You are very fond of Mr. Templeton, my little angel."

"To be sure I am. You have not seen the rocking-horse he is going to give me."

"Not yet sweet child! And how is mamma?"

"Oh, poor, dear mamma," said the child, with a sudden change of voice, and tears in her eyes. "Ah, she is not well!"

"In the family way, to a dead certainty!" muttered Ferrers, with a groan; "but here is my uncle. Horrid name! Uncles were always wicked fellows. Richard the Third, and the man who did something or other to the babes in the wood, were a joke to my hard-hearted old relation, who has robbed me with a widow! The lustful, liquorish old—— My *dear* sir, I'm so glad to see you!"

Mr. Templeton, who was a man very cold in his manners, and always either looked over people's heads or down upon the ground, just touched his nephew's outstretched hand, and telling him he was welcome, observed that it was a very fine afternoon.

"Very, indeed: sweet place this; you see, by the way, that I have already made acquaintance with my fair cousin-in-law. She is very pretty."

"I really think she is," said Mr. Templeton, with some warmth, and gazing fondly at the child, who was now throwing buttercups up in the air, and trying to catch them.—Mr. Ferrers wished in his heart that they had been brick-bats!

"Is she like her mother?" asked the nephew.

"Like whom, sir?"

"Her mother—Mrs. Templeton."

"No, not very; there is an air, perhaps, but the likeness is not remarkably strong Would

you not like to go to your room before dinner?"

"Thank you. Can I not first be presented to Mrs. Tem——"

"She is at her devotions, Mr. Lumley," interrupted Mr. Templeton, grimly.

"The she-hypocrite!" thought Ferrers. "Oh, I am delighted that your pious heart has found so congenial a help-mate!"

"It is a great blessing, and I am grateful for it. This is the way to the house."

Lumley, now formally installed in a grave bed-room, with dimity curtains, and dark-brown paper with light-brown stars on it, threw himself into a large chair, and yawned and stretched with as much fervor as if he could have yawned and stretched himself into his uncle's property. He then slowly exchanged his morning dress for a quiet suit of black, and thanked his stars that, amidst all his sins, he had never been a dandy, and had never rejoiced in a fine waistcoat—a criminal possession that he well knew would have entirely hardened his uncle's conscience against him. He tarried in his room till the second bell summoned him to descend; and then, entering the drawing-room, which had a cold look even in July, found his uncle standing by the mantel-piece, and a young, slight, handsome woman, half-buried in a huge but not comfortable *fauteuil.*

"Your aunt, Mrs. Templeton; madam, my nephew, Mr. Lumley Ferrers," said Templeton, with a wave of the hand. "John,—dinner!"

"I hope I am not late!"

"No," said Templeton, gently, for he had always liked his nephew, and began now to thaw towards him a little on seeing that Lumley put a good face upon the new state of affairs.

"No, my dear boy—no; but I think order and punctuality cardinal virtues in a well-regulated family."

"Dinner, sir," said the butler, opening the folding-doors at the end of the room.

"Permit me," said Lumely, offering his arm to the aunt. "What a lovely place this is!"

Mrs. Templeton said something in reply, but what it was, Ferrers could not discover, so low and choaked was the voice.

"Shy," thought he: "odd for a widow!—but that's the way those husband-buriers take us in!"

Plain as was the general furniture of the apartment, the natural ostentation of Mr. Templeton broke out in the massive value of the plate, and the number of the attendants. He was a rich man, and he was proud of his riches: he knew it was respectable to be rich, and he thought it was moral to be respectable. As for the dinner, Lumely knew enough of his uncle's tastes to be prepared for viands and wines that even he (fastidious gormand as he was) did not despise.

Between the intervals of the eating, Mr. Ferrers endeavored to draw his aunt into conversation, but he found all his ingenuity fail him. There was, in the features of Mrs. Templeton, an expression of deep but calm melancholy, that would have saddened most persons to look upon especially in one so young and lovely. It was evidently something beyond shyness or reserve that made her so silent and subdued, and even in her silence there was so much natural sweetness, that Ferrers could not ascribe her manner to haughtiness, or the desire to repel. He was rather puzzled; "for though," thought he, sensibly enough, "my uncle is not a youth, he is a very rich fellow; and how any widow, who is married again to a rich old fellow, can be melancholy, passes my understanding!"

Templeton, as if to draw attention from his wife's taciturnity, talked more than usual. He entered largely into politics, and regretted that in times so critical he was not in parliament.

"Did I possess your youth and your health, Lumley, I would not neglect my country—Popery is abroad."

"I myself should like very much to be in parliament," said Lumly, boldly.

"I dare say you would," returned the uncle, drily. "Parliament is very expensive—only fit for those who have a large stake in the country. Champagne to Mr. Ferrers."

Lumley bit his lip, and spoke little during the rest of the dinner. Mr. Templeton, however, waxed gracious, by the time the dessert was on the table; and began cutting up a pine-apple, with many assurances to Lumley that gardens were nothing without pineries. "Whenever you settle in the country, nephew, be sure you have a pinery."

"Oh, yes," said Lumley, almost bitterly, "and a pack of hounds, and a French cook; they will all suit my fortune very well."

"You are more thoughtful on pecuniary matters than you used to be," said the uncle.

"Sir," replied Ferrers, solemnly, "in a very short time I shall be what is called a middle-aged man."

"Humph!" said the host.

There was another silence Lumley was a man, as we have said, or implied before, of great knowledge of human nature, at least the ordinary sort of it, and he now revolved in his mind the various courses it might be wise to pursue towards his rich relation. He saw that, in delicate fencing, his uncle had over him the same advantage that a tall man has over a short one with the physical sword-play;—by holding his weapon in a proper position, he kept the other at arm's length. There was a grand reserve and dignity about the man who had something to give away, of which Ferrers, however actively he might shift his ground and flourish his rapier, could not break the defence. He determined, therefore, upon a new game, for which his frankness of manner admirably adapted him. Just as he formed this resolution, Mrs. Templeton rose, and with a gentle bow, and soft, though landguid smile, glided from the room. The two gentlemen, resettled themselves, and Templeton pushed the bottle to Ferrers.

"Help yourself, Lumley; your travels seems to have deprived you of your high spirits—you are pensive."

"Sir," said Ferrers, abruptly, "I wish to consult you."

"Oh, young man! you have been guilty of some excess — you have gambled — you have——"

"I have done nothing, sir, that should make me less worthy your esteem. I repeat, I wish to consult you; I have outlived the hot days of my youth—I am now alive to the claims of the world. I have talents, I believe; and I have application, I know. I wish to fill a position in the world that may redeem my past indolence, and do credit to my family. Sir, I set your example before me, and I now ask your counsel, with the determination to follow it."

Templeton was startled; he half shaded his face with his hand, and gazed searchingly upon the high forehead and bold eyes of his nephew. "I believe you are sincere," said he after a pause.

"You may well believe so, sir."

"Well, I will think of this. I had an honorable ambition—not so extravagant a one, —*that* is sinful; but a *respectable* station in the world is a proper object of desire, and wealth is a blessing; because," added the rich man, taking another slice of the pine-apple,—"it enables us to be of use to our fellow-creatures!"

"Sir, then," said Ferrers, with daring animation—"then I avow my that my ambition is precisely of the kind you speak of. I am obscure, I desire to be reputably known; my fortune is mediocre, I desire it to be great. I ask *you* for nothing—I know your generous heart; but I wish independently to work out my own career!"

"Lumley," said Templeton, "I never esteemed you so much as I do now. Listen to me—I will confide in you; I think the government are under obligations to me."

"I know it," exclaimed Ferrers, whose eyes sparkled at the thought of a sinecure—for sinecures *then* existed!

"And," pursued the uncle, "I intend to ask them a favor in return."

"Oh, sir!"

"Yes; I think—mark me—with management and address, I may——"

"Well, my dear sir!"

"Obtain a barony for myself and heirs; I trust I shall soon have a family!"

Had somebody given Lumley Ferrers a hearty cuff on the ear, he would have thought less of it than of this wind-up of his uncle's ambitious projects. His jaws fell, his eyes grew an inch larger, and he remained perfectly speechless.

"Ay," pursued Mr. Templeton, "I have long dreamed of this; my character is spotless, my fortune great. I have ever exerted my parliamentary influence in favor of ministers; and, in this commercial country, no man has higher claims than Richard Templeton to the honors of a virtuous, loyal, and religious state. Yes, my boy, I like your ambition—you see I have some of it myself; and since you are sincere in your wish to tread in my footsteps, I think I can obtain you a junior

partnership in a highly respectable establishment. Let me see; your capital now is——"

"Pardon me sir," interrupted Lumley, coloring with indignation despite himself, "I honor commerce much, but my paternal relations are not such as would allow me to enter into trade. And permit me to add," continued he, seizing with instant adriotness the new weakness presented to him—"permit me to add that those relations who have been ever kind to me, would, properly managed, be highly efficient in promoting your own views of advancement; for your sake I would not break with them. Lord Saxingham is still a minister—nay, he is in the cabinet."

"Hem—Lumley—hem!" said Templeton, thoughtfully; "we will consider—we will consider. Any more wine?"

"No, I thank you, sir."

"Then I'll just take my evening stroll, and think over matters. You can rejoin Mrs. Templeton. And I say, Lumley,—I read prayers at nine o'clock.—Never forget your Maker, and He will not forget you. The barony will be an excellent thing—eh?—an English peerage—yes—an English peerage! very different from your beggarly countships abroad!"

So saying, Mr. Templeton rang for his hat and cane, and stepped into the lawn from the window of the dining-room.

"'The world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open,'" muttered Ferrers; "I would mould this selfish old man to my purpose; for, since I have neither genius to write, nor eloquence to declaim, I will at least see whether I have not cunning to plot, and courage to act. Conduct—conduct—conduct—there lies my talent; and what is conduct but a steady walk from a design to its execution!"

With these thoughts Ferrers sought Mrs. Templeton. He opened the folding-doors very gently, for all his habitual movements were quick and noiseless, and perceived that Mrs. Templeton sate by the window, and that she seemed engrossed with a book which lay open on a little work-table before her.

"Fordyce's Advice to Young Married Women, I suppose. Sly jade! However, I must not have her against me."

He approached; still Mrs. Templeton did not note him; nor was it till he stood facing her that he himself observed that her tears were falling fast over the page.

He was a little embarrassed, and turning towards the window, affected to cough, and then said, without looking at Mrs. Templeton, "I fear I have disturbed you."

"No," answered the same low, stifled voice that had before replied to Lumley's vain attempt to provoke conversation; "it was a melancholy employment, and perhaps it is not right to indulge in it."

"May I inquire what author so affected you?"

"It is but a volume of poems, and I am no judge of poetry; but it contains thoughts which—which——" Mrs. Templeton paused abruptly, and Lumley quietly took up the book.

"Ah!" said he, turning to the title-page—"my friend ought to be much flattered."

"Your friend?"

"Yes; this, I see, is by Ernest Maltravers, a very intimate ally of mine."

"I should like to see him," cried Mrs. Templeton, almost with animation—"I read but little; it was by chance that I met with one of his books, and they are as if I heard a dear friend speaking to me. Ah! I should like to see him!"

"I'm sure, madam," said the voice of a third person, in an austere and rebuking accent, "I do not see what good it would do your immortal soul to see a man who writes idle verses, which appear to me, indeed, highly immoral. I just looked into that volume this morning, and found nothing but trash—love-sonnets and such stuff."

Mrs. Templeton made no reply, and Lumley, in order to change the conversation which seemed a little too matrimonial for his taste, said, rather awkwardly, "You are returned very soon, sir."

"Yes, I don't like walking in the rain!"

"Bless me, it rains, so it does—I had not observed——"

"Are you wet, sir? had you not better——" began the wife timidly.

"No, ma'am, I'm not wet, I thank you. By the by, nephew, this new author is a friend of yours. I wonder a man of his family should condescend to turn author. He can come to no good. I hope you will drop his acquaintance—authors are very unprofitable

associates, I'm sure. I trust I shall see no more of Mr. Maltravers' books in my house."

"Nevertheless, he is well thought of, sir, and makes no mean figure in the world," said Lumley, stoutly; for he was by no means disposed to give up a friend, who might be as useful to him as Mr. Templeton himself.

"Figure, or no figure—I have not had many dealings with authors in my day; and when I had, I always repented it. Not sound, sir, not sound—all cracked somewhere. Mrs. Templeton, have the kindness to get the Prayer-book—my hassock must be fresh stuffed, it gives me quite a pain in my knee. Lumley, will you ring the bell? Your aunt is very melancholy. True religion is not gloomy; we will read a sermon on Cheerfulness."

"So, so," said Mr. Ferrers to himself, as he undressed that night—"I see that my uncle is a little displeased with my aunt's pensive face—a little jealous of her thinking of anything but himself: *tant mieux*. I must work upon this discovery; it will not do for them to live too happily with each other. And what with that lever, and what with his ambitious projects, I think I see a way to push the good things of this world a few inches nearer to Lumley Ferrers."

CHAPTER III.

'The pride too of her step, as light
Along the unconscious earth she went,
Seemed that of one, born with a right
To walk some heavenlier element."
—*Loves of the Angels.*

* * * "Can it be
That these fine impulses, these lofty thoughts
Burning with their own beauty, are but given
To make me the low slave of vanity?"—*Erinna.*

* * * "Is she not too fair
Even to think of maiden's sweetest care?
The mouth and brow are contrasts."—*Ibid.*

It was two or three evenings after the date of the last chapter, and there was what the newspapers call 'a select party' in one of the noblest mansions in London. A young lady, on whom all eyes were bent, and whose beauty might have served the painter for a model of a Semiramis or Zenobia, more majestic than became her years, and so classically fultless as to have something cold and statue-like in its haughty lineaments, was moving through the crowd that murmured applauses as she past. This lady was Florence Lascelles, the daughter of Lumley's great relation, the Earl of Saxingham, and supposed to be the richest heiress in England. Lord Saxingham himself drew aside his daughter as she swept along.

"Florence," said he, in a whisper, "the Duke of * * * * is greatly struck with you—be civil to him—I am about to present him."

So saying, the Earl turned to a small, dark, stiff-looking man, of about twenty-eight years of age, at his left, and introduced the Duke of * * * * to Lady Florence Lascelles. The duke was unmarried; it was an introduction between the greatest *match* aud the wealthiest heiress in the peerage.

"Lady Florence," said Lord Saxingham, "is as fond of horses as yourself, Duke, though not quite so good a judge."

"I confess I *do* like horses," said the Duke, with a ingenuous air.

Lord Saxingham moved away.

Lady Florence stood mute—one glance of bright contempt shot from her large eyes; her lip slightly curled, and she then half turned aside, and seemed to forget that her new acquaintance was in existence.

His grace, like most great personages, was not apt to take offence; nor could he, indeed, ever suppose that any slight towards the Duke of * * * * could be intended; still he thought it would be proper in Lady Florence to begin the conversation; for he himself, though not shy, was habitually silent, and accustomed to be saved the fatigue of defraying the small charges of society. After a pause, seeing, however, that Lady Florence remained speechless, he began:

"You ride sometimes in the Park, Lady Florence?"

"Very seldom."

"It is, indeed, too warm for riding at present."

"I did not say so."

"Hem—I thought you did."

Another pause.

"Did you speak, Lady Florence?"

"No."

"Oh! I beg pardon—Lord Saxingham is looking very well."

"I am glad you think so."

"Your picture in the exhibition scarcely

does you justice, Lady Florence; yet Lawrence is usually happy."

"You are very flattering," said Lady Florence, with a lively and perceptible impatience in her tone and manner. The young beauty was thorughly spoilt—and now all the scorn of a scornful nature was drawn forth, by observing the envious eyes of the crowd were bent upon one whom the Duke of * * * * was actually talking to. Brilliant as were her own powers of conversation, she would not deign to exert them—she was an aristocrat of intellect rather than birth, and she took it into her head that the Duke was an idiot. She was very much mistaken. If she had but broken up the ice, she would have found that the water below was not shallow. The Duke, in fact, like many other Englishmen, though he did not like the trouble of showing forth, and had an ungainly manner, was a man who had read a good deal, possessed a sound head and an honorable mind, though he did not know what it was to love anybody, to care much for anything, and was at once perfectly sated and yet perfectly contented; for apathy is the combination of satiety and content.

Still Florence judged of him as lively persons are apt to judge of the sedate: besides, she wanted to proclaim to him and to everybody else, how little she cared for dukes and great matches; she, therefore, with a slight inclination of her head, turned away, and extended her hand to a dark young man, who was gazing on her with that respectful but unmistakable admiration which proud women are never proud enough to despise.

"Ah, signor," said she in Italian, "I am so glad to see you; it is a relief, indeed, to find genius in a crowd of nothings."

So saying, the heiress seated herself on one of those convenient couches which hold but two, and beckoned the Italian to her side. Oh, how the vain heart of Castruccio Cesarini beat!—what visions of love, rank, wealth, already flitted before him!

"I almost fancy," said Castruccio, "that the old days of romance are returned, when a queen could turn from princes and warriors to listen to a troubadour."

"Troubadours are now more rare than warriors and princes," replied Florence, with gay animation, which contrasted strongly with the coldness she had manifested to the Duke of * * * *, "and therefore it would not now be a very great merit in a queen to fly from dullness and insipidity to poetry and wit."

"Ah, say not wit," said Cesarini; "wit is incompatible with the grave character of deep feelings;—incompatible with enthusiasm, with worship;—incompatible with the thoughts that wait upon Lady Florence Lascelles."

Florence colored and slightly frowned; but the immense distinction between her position and that of the young foreigner, with her own inexperience, both of real life and the presumption of vain hearts, made her presently forget the flattery that would have offended her in another. She turned the conversation, however, into general channels, and she talked of Italian poetry with a warmth and eloquence worthy of the theme. While they thus conversed, a new guest had arrived, who, from the spot where he stood, engaged with Lord Saxingham, fixed a steady and scrutinizing gaze upon the pair.

"Lady Florence has indeed improved," said this new guest. "I could not have conceived that England boasted any one half so beautiful."

"She certainly is handsome, my dear Lumley,—the Lascelles cast of countenance," replied Lord Saxingham,—"and so gifted! She is positively learned—quite a *bas bleu*. I tremble to think of the crowd of poets and painters who will make a fortune out of her enthusiasm. *Entre nous*, Lumley, I could wish her married to a man of sober sense, like the Duke of * * * *; for sober sense is exactly what she wants. Do observe, she has been just half an hour flirting with that odd-looking adventurer, Signor Cesarini, merely because he writes sonnets, and wears a dress like a stage-player!"

"It is the weakness of the sex, my dear lord," said Lumley; "they like to patronize, and they dote upon all oddities, from China monsters to cracked poets. But I fancy, by a restless glance cast every now and then around the room, that my beautiful cousin has in her something of the coquette."

"There you are quiet right Lumley," returned Lord Saxingham, laughing; "but I will not quarrel with her for breaking hearts and refusing hands, if she do but grow steady at last, and settle into the Duchess of * * * *."

"Duchess of * * * *!" repeated Lumley,

absently; "well, I will go and present myself. I see she is growing tired of the signor. I will sound her as to the ducal impressions, my dear lord."

"Do, *I* dare not," replied the father; "she is an excellent girl, but heiresses are always contradictory. It was very foolish to deprive me of all control over her fortune. Come and see me again soon, Lumley. I suppose you are going abroad?"

"No, I shall settle in England; but of my prospects and plans more hereafter."

With this, Lumley quietly glided away to Florence. There was something in Ferrers that was remarkable from its very simplicity. His clear, sharp features, with the short hair and high brow—the absolute plainness of his dress, and the noiseless, easy, self-collected calm of all his motions, made a strong contrast to the showy Italian, by whose side he now stood. Florence looked up at him with some little surprise at his intrusion.

"Ah, you don't recollect me!" said Lumley, with his pleasant laugh. "Faithless Imogen, after all your vows of constancy! Behold your Alonzo!

> The worms they crept in and the worms they crept out.'

Don't you remember how you trembled when I told you that true story as we

> 'Conversed as we sate on the green?'"

"Oh!" cried Florence, "it is indeed you, my dear cousin—my dear Lumley! What an age since we parted!"

"Don't talk of age—it is an ugly word to a man of my years. Pardon, signor, if I disturb you."

And here Lumley, with a low bow, slid coolly into the place which Cesarini, who had shyly risen, left vacant for him. Castruccio looked disconcerted; but Florence had forgotten him in her delight at seeing Lumley, and Cesarini moved discontentedly away, and seated himself at a distance.

"And I come back," continued Lumley, "to find you a confirmed beauty and a professional coquette.—Don't blush!"

"Do they, indeed, call me a coquette?"

"Oh, yes,—for once the world is just."

"Perhaps I do deserve the reproach. Oh, Lumley, how I despise all that I see and hear!"

"What! even the Duke of * * * *?"

"Yes, I fear even the Duke of * * * * is no exception!"

"Your father will go mad if he hear you."

"My father?—my poor father!—yes, he thinks the utmost that I, Florence Lascelles, am made for, is to wear a ducal coronet and give the best balls in London."

"And pray what was Florence Lascelles made for?"

"Ah! I cannot answer the question. I fear for Discontent and Disdain."

"You are an enigma—but I will take pains, and not rest till I solve you."

"I defy you."

"Thanks—better defy than despise."

"Oh, you must be strangely altered, if I can despise *you*."

"Indeed! what do you remember of me?"

"That you were frank, bold, and therefore, I suppose, true!—that you shocked my aunts and my father by your contempt for the vulgar hypocrisies of our conventional life. Oh, no! I cannot despise you."

Lumley raised his eyes to those of Florence—he gazed on her long and earnestly—ambitious hopes rose high within him.

"My fair cousin," said he, in an altered and serious tone, "I see something in your spirit kindred to mine; and I am glad that yours is one of the earliest voices which confirm my new resolves on my return to busy England?"

"And those resolves?"

"Are an Englishman's—energetic and ambitious."

"Alas, ambition! How many false portraits are there of the great original!"

Lumley thought he had found a clue to the heart of his cousin, and he began to expatiate, with unusual eloquence, on the nobleness of that daring sin which "lost angels heaven." Florence listened to him with attention, but not with sympathy. Lumley was deceived. His was not an ambition that could attract the fastidious but high-souled Idealist. The selfishness of his nature broke out in all the sentiments that he fancied would seem to her most elevated. Place — power — titles — all these objects were low and vulgar to one who saw them daily at her feet.

At a distance, the Duke of * * * * continued

from time to time to direct his cold gaze at Florence. He did not like her the less for not seeming to court him. He had something generous within him, and could understand her. He went away at last, and thought seriously of Florence as a wife. Not a wife for companionship, for friendship, for love; but a wife who could take the trouble of rank off his hands—do him honor, and raise him an heir, whom he might flatter himself would be his own.

From his corner also, with dreams yet more vain and daring, Castruccio Cesarini cast his eyes upon the queen-like brow of the great heiress. Oh, yes, she had a soul—she could disdain rank and revere genius! What a triumph over De Montaigne—Maltravers—all the world, if he, the neglected poet, could win the hand for which the magnates of the earth sighed in vain! Pure and lofty as he thought himself, it was her birth and her wealth which Cesarini adored in Florence. And Lumley, nearer perhaps to the prize than either—yet still far off—went on conversing, with eloquent lips and sparkling eyes, while his whole heart was planning every word, dictating every glance, and laying out (for the most worldly are often the most visionary) the chart for a royal road to fortune. And Florence Lascelles, when the crowd had dispersed and she sought her chamber, forgot all three; and with that morbid romance often peculiar to those for whom Fate smiles the most, mused over the ideal image of the one she *could* love—"in maiden meditation *not* fancy-free!"

CHAPTER IV.

"In mea vesanas habui dispendia vires,
Et Valui pœnas fortis in ipse meas." *—OVID.

"Then might my breast be read within,
A thousand volumes would be written there."
—EARL OF STIRLING.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS was at the height of his reputation; the work which he had deemed the crisis that was to make or mar him was the most brilliantly successful of all he had yet committed to the public. Certainly, chance did as much for it, as merit, as is usually the case with works that become instantaneously popular. We may hammer away at the casket with strong arm and good purpose, and all in vain;—when some morning a careful stroke hits the right nail on the head, and we secure the treasure.

It was at this time, when in the prime of youth—rich, courted, respected, run after—that Ernest Maltravers, fell seriously ill. It was no active or visible disease, but a general irritability of the nerves, and a languid sinking of the whole frame. His labors began, perhaps, to tell against him. In earlier life he had been as active as a hunter of the chamois, and the hardy exercise of his frame counteracted the effects of a restless and ardent mind. The change from an athletic to a sedentary habit of life—the wear and tear of the brain—the absorbing passion for knowledge which day and night kept all his faculties in a stretch, made strange havoc in a constitution naturally strong.

The poor author! how few persons understand, and forbear with, and pity him! He sells his health and youth to a rugged taskmaster. And, O blind and selfish world, you expect him to be as free of manner, and as pleasant of cheer, and as equal of mood, as if he were passing the most agreeable and healthful existence that pleasure couid afford to smooth the wrinkles of the mind, or medicine invent to regulate the nerves of the body! But there was, besides all this, another cause that operated against the successful man!—His heart was too solitary. He lived without the sweet household ties—the connections and amities he formed excited for a moment, but possessed no charm to comfort or to soothe. Cleveland resided so much in the country, and was of so much calmer a temperament, and so much more advanced in age, that with all the friendship that subsisted between them, there was none of that daily and familiar interchange of confidence which affectionate natures demand as the very food of life. Of his brother (as the reader will conjecture from never having been formally presented to him) Ernest saw but little. Colonel Maltravers, one of the gayest and handsomest men of his time, married to a fine lady, lived principally at Paris, except when, for a few weeks in the shooting season, he filled his country house with companious who had nothing in common with

* I had the strength of a madman to my own cost, and employed that strength in my own punishment.

Ernest: the brothers corresponded regularly every quarter, and saw each other once a year —this was all their intercourse. Ernest Maltravers stood in the world alone, with that cold but anxious spectre—Reputation.

It was late at night. Before a table covered with the monuments of erudition and thought sate a young man with a pale and worn countenance. The clock in the room told with a fretting distinctness every moment that lessened the journey to the grave. There was an anxious and expectant expression on the face of the student, and from time to time he glanced to the clock, and muttered to himself. Was it a letter from some adored mistress—the soothing flattery from some mighty arbiter of arts and letters—that the young man eagerly awaited? No; the aspirer was forgotten in the valetudinarian. Ernest Maltravers was waiting the visit of his physician, whom at that late hour a sudden thought had induced him to summon from his rest. At length the well-known knock was heard, and in a few moments the physician entered. He was one well versed in the peculiar pathology of book men, and kindly as well as skilful.

"My dear Mr. Maltravers, what is this? How are we?—not seriously ill, I hope—no relapse—pulse low and irregular, I see, but no fever. You are nervous."

"Doctor," said the student, "I did not send for you at this time of night from the idle fear or fretful caprice of an invalid. But when I saw you this morning, you dropped some hints which have haunted me ever since. Much that it befits the conscience and the soul to attend to without loss of time, depends upon my full knowledge of my real state. If I understand you rightly, I may have but a short time to live—is it so?"

"Indeed!" said the doctor, turning away his face; "you have exaggerated my meaning. I did not say that you were in what we technically call danger."

"Am I then likely to be a *long*-lived man?"

"The doctor coughed.—"That is uncertain, my dear young friend," said he, after a pause.

"Be plain with me. The plans of life must be based upon such calculations as we can reasonably form of its probable duration. Do not fancy that I am weak enough or coward enough to shrink from my abyss which I have approached unconsciously; I desire—I adjure —nay, I command you to be explicit."

There was an earnest and solemn dignity in his patient's voice and manner which deeply touched and impressed the good physician.

"I will answer you frankly," said he; "you over-work the nerves and the brain; if you do not relax, you will subject yourself to confirmed disease and premature death. For several months—perhaps for years to come—you should wholly cease from literary labor. Is this a hard sentence? You are rich and young—enjoy yourself while you can."

Maltravers appeared satisfied—changed the conversation—talked easily on other matters for a few miuutes: nor was it till he had dismissed his physician that he broke forth with the thoughts that were burning in him.

"Oh!" cried he aloud, as he rose and paced the room with rapid strides; "now, when I see before me the broad and luminous path, am I to be condemned to halt and turn aside? A vast empire rises on my view, greater than that of Cæsars and conquerors—an empire durable and universal in the souls of men, that time itself cannot overthrow; and Death marches with me, side by side, and the skeleton hand waves me back to the nothingness of common men."

He paused at the casement—he threw it open, and leant forth and gasped for air. Heaven was serene and still, as morning came coldly forth amongst the wanning stars;—and the haunts of men, in their thoroughfare of idleness and of pleasure, were desolate and void. Nothing, save Nature, was awake.

"And if, O stars!" murmured Maltravers, from the depth of his excited heart, "if I had been insensible to your solemn beauty—if the Heaven and the Earth had been to me but as air and clay—if I were one of a dull and dim-eyed herd—I might live on, and drop into the grave from the ripeness of unprofitable years. It is because I yearn for the great objects of an immortal being, that life shrinks and shrivels up like a scroll. Away! I will not listen to these human and material monitors, and consider life as a thing greater than the things that I would live for. My choice is made, glory is more persuasive than the grave."

He turned impatiently from the casement —his eyes flashed—his chest heaved—he trod the chamber with a monarch's air. All

the calculations of prudence, all the tame and methodical reasonings with which, from time to time, he had sought to sober down the impetuous man into the calm machine, faded away before the burst of awful and commanding passions that swept over his soul. Tell a man, in the full tide of his triumphs, that he bears death within him; and what crisis of thought can be more startling and more terrible.

Maltravers had, as we have seen, cared little for fame, till fame had been brought within his reach; then, with every step he took, new Alps had arisen. Each new conjecture brought to light a new truth that demanded enforcement or defence. Rivalry and competition chafed his blood, and kept his faculties at their full speed. He had the generous race-horse spirit of emulation.—Ever in action, ever in progress, cheered on by the sarcasms of foes, even more by the applause of friends, the desire of glory had become the habit of existence. When we have commenced a career, what stop is there till the grave?—where is the definite barrier of that ambition which, like the eastern bird, seems on the wing, and never rests upon the earth?

Our names are not settled till our death; the ghosts of what we have done are made our haunting monitors—our scourging avengers—if ever we cease to do, or fall short of the younger past. Repose is oblivion; to pause is to unravel all the web that we have woven—until the tomb closes over us, and men, just when it is too late, strike the fair balance between ourselves and our rivals; and we are measured, not by the least, but by the greatest, triumphs we have achieved. Oh, what a crushing sense of impotence comes over us, when we feel that our frame cannot support our mind—when the hand can no longer execute what the soul, actively as ever, conceives and desires!—the quick life tied to the dead form—the ideas fresh as immortality, gushing forth rich and golden, and the broken nerves, and the aching frame, and the weary eyes!—the spirit athirst for liberty and heaven—and the damning, choking consciousness, that we are walled up and prisoned in a dungeon that must be our burial-place! Talk not of freedom—there is no such thing as freedom to a man whose body is the jail, whose infirmities are the racks, of his genius!

Maltravers paused at last, and threw himself on his sofa, wearied and exhausted. Involuntarily, and as a half-unconscious means of escaping from his conflicting and profitless emotions, he turned to several letters, which had for hours lain unopened on his table. Every one the seal of which he broke, seemed to mock his state—every one seemed to attest the fecility of his fortunes. Some bespoke the admiring sympathy of the highest and the wisest—one offered him a brilliant opening into public life—another (it was from Cleveland) was fraught with all the proud and rapturous approbation of a prophet whose auguries are at last fulfilled. At that letter Maltravers sighed deeply, and paused before he turned to the others. The last he opened was in an unknown hand, nor was any name affixed to it. Like all writers of some note, Maltravers was in the habit of receiving anonymous letters of praise, censure, warning, and exhortation—especially from young ladies at boarding-schools, and old ladies in the country; but there was that in the first sentences of the letter, which he now opened with a careless hand, that riveted his attention. It was a small and beautiful hand-writing, yet the letters were more clear and bold than they usually are in feminine caligraphy.

"Ernest Maltravers," began this singular effusion, "have you weighed yourself?—Are you aware of your capacities?—Do you feel that for you there may be a more dazzling reputation than that which appears to content you? You, who seem to penetrate into the subtlest windings of the human heart, and to have examined nature as through a glass—you, whose thoughts stand forth like armies marshalled in defence of Truth, bold and dauntless, and without a stain upon their glittering armor;—are you, at your age, and with your advantages, to bury yourself amidst books and scrolls! Do you forget that action is the grand career for men who think as you do? Will this word-weighing and picture-writing—the cold eulogies of pedants—the listless praises of literary idlers, content all the yearnings of your ambition? You were not made solely for the closet; 'The Dreams of Pindus, and the Aonian Maids,' cannot endure through the noon of manhood. You are too practical for the mere poet, and too poetical to sink into the dull tenor of a learned life. I have never seen you, yet I know you—I read your spirit in your page; that aspiration for something better and greater than the Great and the Good, which colors all your passionate revelations of yourself and others—cannot be satisfied merely by ideal images. You cannot be contented, as poets and historians mostly are, by becoming great only from delineating great men, or imagining great events, or describing a great era. Is it not worthier of you to *be* what you fancy or relate? Awake, Maltravers, awake!

Look into your heart, and feel your proper destinies. And who am I that thus address you?—a woman whose soul is filled with you!—a woman in whom your eloquence has awakened, amidst frivolous and vain circles, the sense of a new existence—a woman who would make you, yourself, the embodied ideal of your own thoughts and dreams, and who would ask from earth no other lot than that of following you on the road of fame with the eyes of her heart. Mistake me not; I repeat that I have never seen you, nor do I wish it; you might be other than I imagine, and I should lose on idol, and be left without a worship. I am a kind of visionary Rosicrucian: it is a spirit that I adore, and not a being like myself. You imagine, perhaps, that I have some purpose to serve in this—I have no object in administering to your vanity; and if I judge you rightly, this letter is one that might make you vain without a blush. Oh, the admiration that does not spring from holy and profound sources of emotion—how it saddens us or disgusts! I have had my share of vulgar homage, and it only makes me feel doubly alone. I am richer than you are—I have youth—I have what they call beauty. And neither riches youth, nor beauty, ever gave me the silent and deep happiness I experience when I think of you. This is a worship that might, I repeat, well make even you vain. Think of these words, I implore you. Be worthy, not of my thoughts, but of the shape in which they represent you; and every ray of glory that surrounds you will brighten my own way, and inspire me with a kindred emulation. Farewell.—I may write to you again, but you will never discover me; and in life I pray that we may never meet!"

CHAPTER V.

"Our list of nobles next let Amri grace."
—*Absalom and Achitophel.*

"Sine me vacivum tempus ne quod dem mihi Laboris." *—Ter.

"I CAN'T think," said one of a group of young men, loitering by the steps of a club-house in St. James's Street—"I can't think what has chanced to Maltravers. Do you observe (as he walks—there—the other side of the way) how much he is altered? He stoops like an old man, and hardly ever lifts his eyes from the ground. He certainly seems sick and sad!"

"Writing books, I suppose."

"Or privately married."

"Or growing too rich—rich men are always unhappy beings."

"Ha, Ferrers, how are you?"

"So—so! What's the news?" replied Lumley.

"Rattler pays forfeit."

"Oh! but in politics?"

"Hang politics!—are you turned politician?"

"At my age, what else is there left to do?"

"I thought so by your hat; all politicians sport odd-looking hats; it is very remarkble, but that is the great symptom of the disease."

"My hat!—*is* it odd?" said Ferrers, taking off the commodity in question, and seriously regarding it.

"Why, who ever saw such a brim?"

"Glad you think so."

"Why, Ferrers?"

"Because it is a prudent policy in this country to surrender something trifling up to ridicule. If people can abuse your hat or your carriage, or the shape of your nose, or a wart on your chin, they let slip a thousand more important matters. 'Tis the wisdom of the camel-driver, who gives up his gown for the camel to trample on, that he may escape himself."

"How droll you are, Ferrers! Well, I shall turn in and read the papers; and you——"

"Shall pay my visits and rejoice in my hat."

"Good day to you;—by the by, your friend, Maltravers, has just past, looking thoughtful, and talking to himself!—What's the matter with him?"

"Lamenting, perhaps, that he too does not wear an odd hat, for gentlemen like you to laugh at, and leave the rest of him in peace. Good day."

On went Ferrers and soon found himself in the Mall of the Park. Here he was joined by Mr. Templeton.

"Well, Lumley," said the latter—(and it may be here remarked, that Mr. Templeton now exhibited towards his nephew a greater respect of manner and tone than he had thought it necessary to observe before)—"well, Lumley, have you seen Lord Saxingham?"

"I have, sir; and I regret to say——"

"I thought so—I thought it," interrupted Templeton; "no gratitude in public men—no wish, in high places, to honor virtue!"

"Pardon me; Lord Saxingham declares that he should be delighted to forward your views—that no man more deserves a peerage; but that——

* Suffer me to employ my spare time in some kind of labor.

"Oh, yes; always '*buts!*'"

"But that there are so many claimants at present whom it is impossible to satisfy; and—and—but I feel I ought not to go on."

"Proceed, sir, I beg."

"Why, then, Lord Saxingham is (I must be frank) a man who has a great regard for his own family. Your marriage (a source, my dear uncle, of the greatest gratification to *me*) cuts off the probable chance of your fortune and title, if you acquire the latter, descending to——"

"Yourself!" put in Templeton, drily. "Your relation seems, for the first time, to have discovered how dear your interests are to him."

"For me individually, sir, my relation does not care a rush—but he cares a great deal for any member of his house being rich and in high station. It increases the range and credit of his connections; and Lord Saxingham is a man whom connections help to keep great. To be plain with you, he will not stir in this business, because he does not see how his kinsman is to be benefited, or his house strengthened."

"Public virtue!" exclaimed Templeton.

"Virtue, my dear uncle, is a female: as long as she is private property, she is excellent; but Public Virtue, like any other public lady, is a common prostitute."

"Pshaw!" grunted Templeton, who was too much out of humor to read his nephew the lecture he might otherwise have done upon the impropriety of his simile; for Mr. Templeton was one of those men who hold it vicious to talk of vice as existing in the world; he was very much shocked to hear anything called by its proper name.

"Has not Mrs. Templeton some connections that may be useful to you?"

"No, sir!" cried the uncle, in a voice of thunder.

"Sorry to hear it—but we cannot expect all things: you have married for love—you have a happy home, a charming wife—this is better than a title and a fine lady."

"Mr. Lumely Ferrers, you may spare me your consolations. My wife——"

"Loves you dearly, I dare say," said the imperturable nephew. "She has so much sentiment—is so fond of poetry. Oh, yes, she must love one who has done so much for her."

"Done so much!—what do you mean?"

"Why, with your fortune—your station—your just ambition—you, who might have married any one; nay, by remaining unmarried, have conciliated all my interested, selfish relations, hang them!—you have married a lady without connections—and what more could you do for her?"

"Pooh, pooh,—you don't know all."

Here Templeton stopped short, as if about to say too much, and frowned—then, after a pause, he resumed—"Lumely, I have married, it is true. You may not be my heir, but I will make it up to you—that is, if you deserve my affection."

"My dear unc——"

"Don't interrupt me, I have projects for you. Let our interests be the same. The title may yet descend to you. I may have no male offspring—meanwhile, draw on me to any reasonable amount—young men have expenses—but be prudent, and if you want to get on in the world, never let the world detect you in a scrape. There, leave me now."

"My best, my heartfelt thanks!"

"Hush—sound Lord Saxingham again; I must and will have this bauble—I have set my heart on it." So saying, Templeton waved away his nephew, and musingly pursued his path towards Hyde Park Corner, where his carriage awaited him. As soon as he entered his demesnes, he saw his wife's daughter running across the lawn to greet him. His heart softened; he checked the carriage and descended: he caressed her, he played with her, he laughed as she laughed. No parent could be more fond.

"Lumley Ferrers has talent to do me honor," said he, anxiously, "but his principles seem unstable. However, surely that open manner is the sign of a good heart!"

Meanwhile, Ferrers, in high spirits, took his way to Ernest's house. His friend was not at home, but Ferrers never wanted a host's presence in order to be at home himself. Books were round him in abundance, but Ferrers was not one of those who read for amusement. He threw himself into an easy chair, and began weaving new meshes of ambition and intrigue. At length the door opened, and Maltravers entered.

"Why, Ernest, how ill you are looking!"

"I have not been well, but I am now recov-

ing. As physicians recommend change of air to ordinary patients—so I am about to try change of habit. Active I must be—action is the condition of my being; but I must have done with books for the present. You see me in a new character."

"How?"

"That of a public man—I have entered parliament."

"You astonish me!—I have read the papers this morning. I see not even a vacancy, much less an election."

"It is all managed by the lawyer and the banker. In other words, my seat is a close borough."

"No bore of constituents. I congratulate you, and envy. I wish I were in parliament myself."

"You! I never fancied you bitten by the political mania."

"Political!—no. But it is the most repectable way, with luck, of living on the public. Better than swindling."

"A candid way of viewing the question. But I thought at one time you were half a Benthamite, and that your motto was, 'The greatest happiness of the greatest number.'"

"The greatest number to me is number *one*. I agree with the Pythagoreans—unity is the perfect principle of creation! Seriously, how can you mistake the principles of opinion for the principles of conduct? I am a Benthamite, a benevolist, as a logician—but the moment I leave the closet for the world, I lay aside speculation for others, and act for myself."

"You are at least more frank than prudent in these confessions."

"There you are wrong. It is by affecting to be worse than we are that we become popular—and we get credit for being both honest and practical fellows. My uncle's mistake is to be a hypocrite in words: it rarely answers. Be frank in words, and nobody will suspect hypocrisy in your designs."

Maltravers gazed hard at Ferrers—something revolted and displeased his high-wrought Platonism in the easy wisdom of his old friend. But he felt almost for the first time, that Ferrers was a man to get on in the world—and he sighed:—I hope it was for the world's sake!

After a short conversation on indifferent matters, Cleveland was announced; and Ferrers, who could make nothing out of Cleveland, soon withdrew. Ferrers was now becoming an economist in his time.

"My dear Maltravers," said Cleveland when thay were alone. "I am so glad to see you; for, in the first place, I rejoice to find you are extending your career of usefulness."

"Usefulness—ah, let me think so! Life is so uncertain and so short, that we cannot too soon bring the little it can yield into the great commonwealth of the Beautiful or the Honest; and both belong to and make up the Useful. But in politics, and in a highly artificial state, what doubts beset us! what darkness surrounds! If we connive at abuses, we juggle with our own reason and integrity—if we attack them, how much, how fatally we may derange that solemn and conventional ORDER which is the mainspring of the vast machine! How little, too, can one man, whose talents may not be in that coarse road—in that mephitic atmosphere, he enabled to effect!"

"He may effect a vast deal even without eloquence or labor;—he may effect a vast deal, if he can set one example, amidst a crowd of selfish aspirants and heated fanatics, of an honest and dispassionate man. He may effect more, if he may serve among the representatives of that hitherto unrepresented thing—Literature; if he redeem, by an ambition above place and emolument, the character for subservience that court-poets have obtained for letters—if he may prove that speculative knowledge is not disjoined from the practical world, and maintain the dignity of disinterestedness that should belong to learning. But the end of a scientific morality is not to serve others only, but also to perfect and accomplish our individual selves; our own souls are a solemn trust to our own lives. You are about to add to your experience of human motives and active men; and whetever additional wisdom you acquire, will become equally evident and equally useful, no matter whether it be communicated through action or in books. Enough of this, my dear Ernest. I have come to dine with you, and make you accompany me to-night to a house where you will be welcome, and I think interested. Nay, no excuses. I have promised Lord Latimer that he shall make your acquaintance, and he is one of the most eminent men with whom political life will connect you."

And to this change of habits, from the closet to the senate, had Maltravers been induced by a state of health, which, with most men, would have been an excuse for indolence. Indolent he could not be: he had truly said to Ferrers, that "action was the condition of his being." If THOUGHT, with its fever and aching tension, had been too severe a task-master on the nerves and brain, the coarse and homely pursuit of practical politics would leave the imagination and intellect in repose, while it would excite the hardier qualities and gifts, which animate without exhausting. So, at least, hoped Maltravers. He remembered the profound saying in one of his favorite German authors, "that to keep the mind and body in perfect health, it is necessary to mix habitually and betimes in the common affairs of men." And the anonymous correspondent? Had her exhortations any influence on his decision? I know not. But when Cleveland left him, Maltravers unlocked his desk, and re-perused the last letter he had received from the Unknown. The *last* letter!—yes, those epistles had now become frequent.

CHAPTER VI.

* * * * "Le brillant de votre esprit donne un si grand éclat à votre toint et à vos yeux, que quoiqu'il semble que l'esprit ne doit toucher que les oreilles, il est pourtant certain que la votre eblouit les yeux."—*Lettres de Madame de Sevigne.**

AT Lord Latimer's house were assembled some hundreds of those persons who are rarely found together in London society: for business, politics, and literature, draught off the most eminent men and usually leave to houses that receive the world little better than indolent rank or ostentatious wealth. Even the young men of pleasure turn up their noses at parties now-a-days, and find society a bore. But there are some dozen or two of houses, the owners of which are both apart from and above the fashion, in which a foreigner may see, collected under the same roof, many of the most remarkable men of busy, thoughtful, majestic England. Lord Latimer himself had been a cabinet minister. He retired from public life on pretence of ill-health; but, in reality, because its anxious bustle was not congenial to a gentle and accomplished, but somewhat feeble, mind. With a high reputuation and an excellent cook he enjoyed a great popularity, both with his own party and the world in general; and he was the centre of a small but distinguished circle of acquaintances who drank Latimer's wine, and quoted Latimer's sayings, and liked Latimer much better, because, not being author or minister, he was not in their way.

Lord Latimer received Maltravers with marked courtesy, and even deference, and invited him to join his own whist-table, which was one of the highest compliments his lordship could pay to his intellect. But when his guest refused the proffered honor, the Earl turned him over to the Countess, as having become the property of the womankind; and was soon immersed in his aspirations for the odd trick.

While Maltravers was conversing with Lady Latimer, he happened to raise his eyes, and saw opposite to him a young lady of such remarkable beauty, that he could scarcely refrain from an admiring exclamation,—"And who," he asked, recovering himself, "is that lady? It is strange that even I, who go so little into the world, should be compelled to inquire the name of one whose beauty must already have made her celebrated."

"Oh, Lady Florence Lascelles—she came out last year. She is, indeed, most brilliant, yet more so in mind and accomplishments than face. I must be allowed to introduce you."

At this offer, a strange shyness, and as it were reluctant distrust, seized Maltravers—a kind presentiment of danger and evil. He drew back, and would have made some excuse, but Lady Latimer did not heed his embarrassment, and was already by the side of Lady Florence Lascelles. A moment more, and beckoning to Maltravers, the Countess presented him to the lady. As he bowed and seated himself beside his new acquaintance, he could not but observe that her cheeks were suffused with the most lively blushes, and that she received him with a confusion not common even in ladies just brought out and just introduced to "a lion." He was rather puz-

* The brilliancy of your wit gives so great a lustre to your complexion and your eyes, that though it seems that wit should only reach the ears, it is altogether certain that yours dazzles the eyes.

zled than flattered by these tokens of embarrassment, somewhat akin to his own; and the first few sentences of their conversation passed off with a certain awkwardness and reserve. At this moment, to the surprise, perhaps to the relief, of Ernest, they were joined by Lumely Ferrers

"Ah, Lady Florence, I kiss your hands—I am charmed to find you acquainted with my friend Maltravers."

"And Mr. Ferrers, what makes him so late to-night!" asked the fair Florence, with a sudden ease which rather startled Maltravers.

"A dull dinner, *voilà tout!*—I have no other excuse." And Ferrers, sliding into a vacant chair on the other side of Lady Florence, conversed volubly and unceasingly, as if seeking to monopolize her attention.

Ernest had not been so much captivated with the manner of Florence as he had been struck with her beauty, and now, seeing her apparently engaged with another, he rose and quietly moved away. He was soon one of a knot of men who were conversing on the absorbing topics of the day; and as by degrees the exciting subject brought out his natural eloquence and masculine sense, the talkers became listeners, the knot widened into a circle, and he himself was unconsciously the object of general attention and respect.

"And what think you of Mr. Maltravers?" asked Ferrers, carelessly; "does he keep up your expectations?"

Lady Florence had sunk into a reverie, and Ferrers repeated his question.

"He is younger than I imagined him,—and —and—"

"Handsomer, I suppose you mean."

"No! calmer and less animated."

"He seems animated enough now," said Ferrers; "but your ladylike conversation failed in striking the Promethean spark. 'Lay that flattering unction to your soul.'"

"Ah, you are right—he must have thought me very——"

"Beautiful, no doubt."

"Beautiful?—I hate the word, Lumley. I wish I were not handsome—I might then get some credit for my intellect."

"Humph!" said Ferrers, significantly.

"Oh, you don't think so, sceptic," said Florence, shaking her head with a slight laugh, and altered manner.

"Does it matter what *I* think said Ferrers, with an attempted touch at the sentimental, when Lord This, and Lord That, and Mr. So-and-So, and Count what-d'ye-call-him, are all making their way to you, to dispossess me of envied monopoly?"

While Ferrers spoke, several of the scattered loungers grouped around Florence, and the conversation, of which she was the cynosure, became animated and gay. Oh, how brilliant she was, that peerless Florence!—with what petulant and sparkling grace came wit and wisdom, and even genius, from those ruby lips! Even the assured Ferrers felt his subtle intellect as dull and coarse to hers, and shrank with a reluctant apprehension from the arrows of her careless and prodigal repartees. For there was a scorn in the nature of Florence Lascelles which made her wit pain more frequently than it pleased. Educated even to learning—courageous even to a want of feminacy—she delighted to sport with ignorance and pretension, even in the highest places; and the laugh that she excited was like lightning,—no one could divine where next it might fall.

But Florence, though dreaded and unloved, was yet courted, flattered, and the rage. For this there were two reasons; first, she was a coquette, and secondly, she was an heiress.

Thus the talkers in the room were divided into two principal groups, over one of which Maltravers may be said to have presided; over the other, Florence. As the former broke up, Ernest was joined by Cleveland.

"My dear cousin," said Florence, suddenly, and in a whisper, as she turned to Lumley, "your friend is speaking of me—I see it. Go, I implore you, and let me know what he says!"

"The commission is not flattering," said Ferrers, almost sullenly.

"Nay, a commission to gratify a woman's curiosity is ever one of the most flattering embassies with which we can invest an able negotiator."

"Well, I must do your bidding, though I disown the favor." Ferrers moved away, and joined Cleveland and Maltravers.

"She is, indeed, beautiful: so perfect a contour I never beheld; she is the only woman I ever saw in whom the aquiline features seem more classical than even the Greek."

"So, that is your opinion of my fair cousin!" cried Ferrers; "you are caught."

"I wish he were," said Cleveland. "Ernest is now old enough to settle, and there is not a more dazzling prize in England—rich, high-born, lovely, and accomplished."

"And what say you?" asked Lumley, almost impatiently, to Maltravers.

"That I never saw one whom I admire more or could love less," replied Ernest, as he quitted the rooms.

Ferrers looked after him, and muttered to himself; he then rejoined Florence, who presently rose to depart, and taking Lumley's arm, said, "Well, I see my father is looking round for me—and so for once I will forestall him. Come, Lumley, let me join him: I know he wants to see you."

"Well, said Florence; blushing deeply, and almost breathless, as they crossed the now half-empty apartments.

"Well, my cousin?"

"You provoke me—well, then, what said your friend?"

"That you deserved your reputation of beauty, but that you were not his style. Maltravers is in love, you know?"

"In love?"

"Yes, a pretty Frenchwoman: quite romantic—an attachment of some years' standing."

Florence turned away her face, and said no more.

"That's a good fellow, Lumley," said Lord Saxingham; "Florence is never more welcome to my eyes than at half-past one o'clock, A. M., when I associate her with thoughts of my natural rest, and my unfortunate carriage horses. By the by, I wish you would dine with me next Saturday."

"Saturday: unfortunately, I am engaged to my uncle."

"Oh! he has behaved handsomely to you?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Tempteton pretty well?"

"I fancy so."

"As ladies wish to be, etc.?" whispered his lordship.

"No, thank Heaven!"

"Well, if the old man could but make you his heir, we might think twice about the title."

"My dear lord, stop! one favor—write me a line to hint that delicately."

"No—no letters; letters always get into the papers."

"But cautiously worded—no danger of publication, on my honor."

"I'll think of it. Good night."

BOOK SEVENTH.

Χρὴ ὡς ἄριστον μὲν σὸντον πειρᾶσθαι, γινέσθαι, μὴ μόνον δέ αὐτον νομίζειν ἄριστον δύνασθαι γενέσθαι, &c.
—PLOTIN. Ens. 11. lib. ix. c. 9

Every man should strive to be as good as possible, but not suppose himself to be the only thing that is good.

CHAPTER I.

'Deceit is the strong but subtile chain which runs through all the members of a society and links them together; trick or be tricked, is the alternative; 'tis the way of the world, and without it intercourse would drop.'—*Anonymous Writer of* 1722.

"A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came."
—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

"His years but young, but his experience old."
—SHAKESPEARE.

"He after honor hunts, I after love."—*Ibid.*

LUMLEY FERRERS was one of the few men in the world who act upon a profound, deliberate, and organized system—he had done so even from a boy. When he was twenty-one, he had said to himself, "Youth is the season for enjoyment: the triumphs of manhood, the wealth of age, do not compensate for a youth spent in unpleasurable toils." Agreeably to this maxim, he had resolved not to adopt any profession; and being fond of travel, and of a restless temper, he had indulged abroad in all the gratifications that his moderate income could afford him: that income went farther on the Continent than at home, which was another reason for the prolongation of his travels. Now, when the whims and passions of youth were sated; and, ripened by a consummate and various knowledge of mankind, his harder capacities of mind became developed and centered into such ambition as it was his nature to conceive, he acted no less upon a regular and methodical plan of conduct, which he carried into details. He had little or nothing within himself to cross his cold theories by contradictory practice; for he was curbed by no principles, and regulated but by few tastes: and our tastes are often checks as powerful as our principles. Looking round the English world, Ferrers saw, that at his age and with an equivocal position, and no chances to throw away, it was necessary that he should cast off all attributes of the character of the wanderer and the *garçon*.

"There is nothing respectable in lodgings and a cab," said Ferrers to himself—that "*self*" was his grand confidant! "nothing stationary. Such are the appliances of a here-to-day gone-to-morrow kind of life. One never looks substantial till one pays rates and taxes, and has a bill with one's butcher!"

Accordingly, without saying a word to anybody, Ferrers took a long lease of a large house, in one of those quiet streets that proclaim the owners do not wish to be made by fashionable situations—streets in which, if you have a large house, it is supposed to be because you can afford one. He was very particular in its being a respectable street—Great George Street, Westminster, was the one he selected.

No frippery or baubles, common to the mansions of young bachelors—no buhl, and marquetrie, and Sévres china, and cabinet picture, distinguished the large dingy drawing-rooms of Lumley Ferrers. He bought all the old furniture a bargain of the late tenant—tea-colored chintz curtains, and chairs and sofas that were venerable and solemn with the accumulated dust of twenty-five years. The only things about which he was particular were a very long dining-table that would hold four-and-twenty, and a new mahogany sideboard. Somebody asked him why he

cared about such articles. "I don't know," said he, "but I observe all respectable family-men do—there must be something in it—I shall discover the secret by and by."

In this house did Mr. Ferrers ensconce kimself with two middle-aged maid-servants, and a man out of livery, whom he chose from a multitude of candidates, because the man looked especially well fed.

Having thus settled himself, and told every one that the lease of his house was for sixty-three years, Lumley Ferrers made a little calculation of his probable expenditure, which he found, with good management, might amount to about one-fourth more than his income.

"I shall take the surplus out of my capital," said he, "and try the experiment for five years; if it don't do, and pay me profitably, why then either men are not to be lived upon, or Lumley Ferrers is a much duller dog than he thinks himself!"

Mr. Ferrers had deeply studied the character of his uncle, as a prudent speculator studies the qualities of a mine in which he means to invest his capital, and much of his present proceedings was intended to act upon the uncle as well as upon the world. He saw that the more he could obtain for himself, not a noisy, social, fashionable reputation, but a good, sober, substantial one, the more highly, Mr. Templeton would consider him, and the more likely he was to be made his uncle's heir,—that is, provided Mrs. Templeton did not supersede the nepotal parasite by indigenous olive branches. This last apprehension died away as time passed, and no signs of fertility appeared. And, accordingly, Ferrers thought he might prudently hazard more upon the game on which he now ventured to rely. There was one thing, however, that greatly disturbed his peace; Mr. Templeton, though harsh and austere in his manner to his wife, was evidently attached to her; and, above all, he cherished the fondest affection for his daughter-in-law. He was as anxious for her health, her education, her little childish enjoyments, as if he had been not only her parent but a very doting one He could not bear her to be crossed or thwarted. Mr. Templeton, who had never spoiled anything before, not even an old pen, (so careful and calculating, and methodical was he), did his best to spoil this beautiful child, whom he could not even have the vain luxury of thinking he had produced to the admiring world.

Softly, exquisitely lovely was that little girl; and every day she increased in the charm of her person, and in the caressing fascination of her childish ways. Her temper was so sweet and docile, that fondness and petting, however injudiciously exhibited, only seemed yet more to bring out the colors of a grateful and tender nature. Perhaps the measured kindness of more reserved affection might have been the true way of spoiling one whose instincts were all for exacting and returning love. She was a plant that suns less warm might have nipped and chilled. But beneath an uncapricious and unclouded sunshine she sprang up in a luxurious bloom of heart and sweetness of disposition.

Every one, even those who did not generally like children, delighted in this charming creature, excepting only Mr. Lumley Ferrers. But that gentleman, less mild than Pope's Narcissa,—

"To make a wash had gladly stewed the child!"

He had seen how very common it is for a rich man, married late in life, to leave everything to a young widow and her children by her former marriage, when once attached to the latter; and he sensibly felt that he himself had but a slight hold over Templeton by the chain of the affections. He resolved, therefore, as much as possible, to alienate his uncle from his young wife; trusting, that as the influence of the wife was weakened, that of the child would be lessened also; and to raise in Templeton's vanity and ambition an ally that might supply to himself the want of love. He pursued his twofold scheme with masterly art and address. He first sought to secure the confidence and regard of the melancholy and gentle mother; and in this,—for she was peculiarly unsuspicious and inexperienced, he obtained signal and complete success. His frankness of manner, his deferential attention, the art with which he warded off from her the spleen or ill-humor of Mr. Templeton, the cheerfulness that his easy gaiety threw over a very gloomy house, made the poor lady hail his visits and trust in his friendship. Perhaps she was glad of any interruption to *tête-à-têtes* with a severe and ungenial husband, who had no sympathy for the sorrows, of whatever nature they might be, which preyed upon her, and

who made it a point of morality to find fault wherever he could.

The next step in Lumley's policy was to arm Templeton's vanity against his wife, by constantly refreshing his conciousness of the sacrifices he had made by marriage, and the certainty that he would have attained all his wishes had he chosen more prudently. By perpetually, but most judiciously, rubbing this sore point, he, as it were, fixed the irritability into Templeton's constitution, and it reacted on all his thoughts, aspiring or domestic. Still, however, to Lumley's great surprise and resentment, while Templeton cooled to his wife, he only warmed to her child. Lumley had not calculated enough upon the thirst and craving for affection in most human hearts; and Templeton, though not exactly an amiable man, had some excellent qualities; if he had less sensitively regarded the opinion of the world, he would neither have contracted the vocabulary of cant, nor sickened for a peerage —both his affectation of saintship, and his gnawing desire of rank, arose from extraordinary and morbid defference to opinion, and a wish for worldly honors and respect, which he felt that his mere talents could not secure to him.

But he was, at bottom, a kindly man—charitable to the poor, considerate to his servants, and had within him the want to love and be loved, which is one of the desires wherewith the atoms of the universe are cemented and harmonized. Had Mrs. Templeton evinced *love* to *him*, he might have defied all Lumley's diplomacy, been consoled for worldly disadvantages, and been a good and even uxorious husband. But she evidently did not love him, though an admirable, patient, provident wife; and her daughter *did* love him—love him as well even as she loved her mother; and the hard worldling would not have accepted a kingdom as the price of that little fountain of pure and ever-refreshing tenderness. Wise and penetrating as Lumley was, he never could thoroughly understand this weakness, as he called it; for we never know men entirely, unless we have complete sympathies with men in all their natural emotions; and Nature had left the workmanship of Lumley Ferrers unfinished and incomplete, by denying him the possibility of caring for anything but himself.

His plan for winning Templeton's esteem and deference was, however, completely triumphant. He took care that nothing in his *ménage* should appear "*extravagant;*" all was sober, quiet, and well-regulated. He declared that he had so managed as to live within his income; and Templeton, receiving no hint for money, nor aware that Ferrers had on the continent consumed a considerable portion of his means, believed him. Ferrers gave a great many dinners, but he did not go on that foolish plan which has been laid down by persons who pretend to know life, as a means of popularity—he did not profess to give dinners better than other people. He knew that, unless you are a very rich or a very great man, no folly is equal to that of thinking that you soften the hearts of your friends, by soups *à la bisque*, and Johannisberg at a guinea a bottle! They all go away, saying, "What right has that d——d fellow to give a better dinner than we do? What horrid taste? What ridiculous presumption!"

No; though Ferrers himself was a most scientific epicure, and held the luxury of the palate at the highest possible price, he dieted his friends on what he termed "*respectable* fare."

His cook put plenty of flour into the oyster-sauce; cods'-head and shoulders made his invariable fish; and four *entrées*, without flavor or pretence, were duly supplied by the pastry-cook, and carefully eschewed by the host. Neither did Mr. Ferrers affect to bring about him gay wits and brilliant talkers. He confined himself to men of substantial consideration, and generally took care to be himself the cleverest person present; while he turned the conversation on serious matters crammed for the occasion—politics, stocks, commerce, and the criminal code. Pruning his gaiety, though he retained his frankness, he sought to be known as a highly-informed, pains-taking man, who would be sure to rise. His connections, and a certain nameless charm about him, consisting chiefly in a pleasant countenance, a bold yet winning candor, and the absence of all *hauteur* or pretence, enabled him to assemble round this plain table, which, if it gratified no taste, wounded no self-love, a sufficient number of public men of rank, and eminent men of business, to answer his purpose.

The situation he had chosen, so near the

Houses of Parliament, was convenient to politicians, and by degrees, the large dingy drawing-rooms became a frequent resort for public men to talk over those thousand underplots by which a party is served or attacked. Thus, though not in parliament himself Ferrers became insensibly associated with parliamentary men and things; and the ministerial party, whose politics he espoused, praised him highly, made use of him, and meant some day or other, to do something for him. While the career of this able and unprincipled man thus opened—and of course the opening was not made in a day—Ernest Maltravers was ascending, by a rough, thorny, and encumbered path, to that eminence on which the monuments of men are built. His success in public life was not brilliant nor sudden. For, though he had eloquence and knowledge, he disdained all oratorical devices; and though he had passion and energy, he could scarcely be called a warm partisan.

He met with much envy, and many obstacles; and the gracious and buoyant socialty of temper and manners, that had, in early youth, made him the idol of his contemporaries at school or college, had long since faded away into a cold, settled, and lofty, though gentle reserve, which did not attract towards him the animal spirits of the herd. But though he spoke seldom, and heard many, with half his powers, more enthusiastically cheered, he did not fail of commanding attention and respect; and though no darling of cliques and parties, yet in that great body of the people who were ever the audience and tribunal to which, in letters or in politics, Maltravers appealed, there was silently growing up, and spreading wide, a belief in his upright intentions, his unpurchasable honor, and his correct and well-considered views. He felt that his name was safely invested, though the return for the capital was slow and moderate. He was contented to abide his time.

Every day he grew more attached to that only true philosophy which makes a man, as far as the world will permit, a world to himself; and from the height of a tranquil and serene self-esteem, he felt the sun shine above him, when malignant clouds spread sullen and ungenial below. He did not despise or wilfully shock opinion, neither did he fawn upon and flatter it. Where he thought the world should be humored, he humored—where contemned, he contemned it. There are many cases in which an honest, well-educated, high-hearted individual is a much better judge than the multitude of what is right and what is wrong; and in these matters he is not worth three straws if he suffer the multitude to bully or coax him out of his judgment. The Public, if you indulge it, is a most damnable gossip, thrusting its nose into people's concerns, where it has no right to make or meddle; and in those things, where the Public is impertinent, Maltravers scorned and resisted its interference as haughtily as he would the interference of any insolent member of the insolent whole. It was this mixture of deep love and profound respect for the eternal PEOPLE, and of calm, passionless disdain for that capricious charlatan, the momentary PUBLIC, which made Ernest Maltravers an original and solitary thinker; and an actor, in reality modest and benevolent, in appearance arrogant and unsocial. "Pauperism, in contradistinction to poverty," he was wont to say, "is the dependence upon other people for existence, not on our own exertions; there is a moral pauperism in the man who is dependent on others for that support of moral life—self-respect."

Wrapped in this philosophy, he pursued his haughty and lonesome way, and felt that in the deep heart of mankind, when prejudices and envies should die off, there would be a sympathy with his motives and his career. So far as his own health was concerned, the experiment had answered. No mere drudgery of business—late hours and dull speeches—can produce the dread exhaustion which follows the efforts of the soul to mount into the higher air of severe thought or intense imagination. Those faculties which had been overstrained now lay fallow—and the frame rapidly regained its tone. Of private comfort and inspiration Ernest knew but little. He gradually grew estranged from his old friend Ferrers, as their habits became opposed. Cleveland lived more and more in the country, and was too well satisfied with his quondam pupil's course of life and progressive reputation to trouble him with exhortation or advice. Cesarini had grown a literary lion, whose genius was vehemently lauded by all he reviews—on the same principle as that which induces us to praise foreign singers or dead men;—we

must praise something, and we don't like to praise those who jostle ourselves. Cesarini had therefore grown prodigiously conceited—swore that England was the only country for true merit, and no longer concealed his jealous anger at the wider celebrity of Maltravers. Ernest saw him squandering away his substance, and prostituting his talents to drawing-room trifles, with a compassionate sigh. He sought to warn him, but Cesarini listened to him with such impatience that he resigned the office of monitor. He wrote to De Montaigne, who succeeded no better. Cesarini was bent on playing his own game. And to one game, without a metaphor, he had at last come. His craving for excitement vented itself at Hazard, and his remaining guineas melted daily away.

But De Montaigne's letters to Maltravers consoled him for the loss of less congenial friends. The Frenchman was now an eminent and celebrated man; and his appreciation of Maltravers was sweeter to the latter than would have been the huzzas of crowds. But, all this while, his vanity was pleased and his curiosity roused by the continued correspondence of his unseen Egeria. That correspondence (if so it may be called, being all on one side) had now gone on for a considerable time, and he was still wholly unable to discover the author: its tone had of late altered—it had become more sad and subdued—it spoke of the hollowness as well as the rewards of fame; and, with a touch of true womanly sentiment, often hinted more at the rapture of soothing dejection, than of sharing triumph. In all these letters, there was the undeniable evidence of high intellect and deep feeling; they excited a strong and keen interest in Maltravers, yet the interest was not that which made him wish to discover, in order that he might love, the writer. They were for the most part too full of the irony and bitterness of a *man's* spirit, to fascinate one who considered that gentleness was the essence of a woman's strength. *Temper* spoke in them, no less than mind and heart, and it was not the sort of temper which a man who loves women to be womanly could admire.

"I hear you often spoken of," (ran one of these strange epistles,) "and I am almost equally angry whether fools presume to praise or to blame you. This miserable world we live in, how I loathe and disdain it!—yet I desire you to serve and to master it! Weak contradiction, effeminate paradox! Oh! rather a thousand times that you would fly from its mean temptations and poor rewards!—If the desert were your dwelling-place and you wished one minister, I could renounce all—wealth, flattery, repute, womanhood, to serve you.

* * * * *
* * * * *

"I once admired you for your genius. My disease has fastened on me, and I now almost worship you for yourself. I have seen you, Ernest Maltravers,—seen you often,—and when you never suspected that these eyes were on you. Now that I have seen, I understand you better. We cannot judge men by their books and deeds. Posterity can know nothing of the beings of the past. A thousand books never written—a thousand deeds never done—are in the eyes and lips of the few greater than the herd. In that cold, abstracted gaze, that pale and haughty brow, I read the disdain of obstacles, which is worthy of one who is confident of the goal. But my eyes fill with tears when I survey you!—you are sad, you are alone! If failures do not mortify you, success does not elevate. Oh, Maltravers, I, woman as I am, and living in a narrow circle, I, even I, know at last, that to have desires nobler, and ends more august, than others, is but to surrender waking life to morbid and melancholy dreams.

* * * * *
* * * * *

"Go more into the world, Maltravers—go more into the world, or quit it altogether. Your enemies must be met; they accumulate, they grow strong—you are too tranquil, too slow in your steps towards the prize which should be yours, to satisfy my impatience, to satisfy your friends. Be less refined in your ambition, that you may be more immediately useful. The feet of clay, after all, are the swiftest in the race. Even Lumley Ferrers will outstrip you if you do not take heed.

* * * * *

"Why do I run on thus?—you—you love another, yet you are not less the ideal that I could love—if I ever loved any one. You love—and yet—well—no matter."

CHAPTER II.

"Well, but this is being only an official nobleman. No matter, 'tis still being a nobleman, and that's his aim."—*Anonymous Writer of* 1772.

"La musique est le seul des talens qui jouissent de lui-meme; tous les autres veulent des temoins." *
—MARMONTEL.

"Thus the slow ox would gaudy trappings claim."
—HORACE.

MR. TEMPLETON had not obtained his peerage, and, though he had met with no direct refusal, nor made even a direct application to head-quarters, he was growing sullen. He had great parliamentary influence, not close

* Music is the sole talent which gives pleasure of itself; all the others require witnesses.

borough, illegitimate influence, but very proper orthodox influence of character, wealth, and so forth. He could return one member at least for a city—he could almost return one member for a county, and in three boroughs, any activity on his part could turn the scale in a close contest. The ministers were strong, but still they could not afford to lose supporters hitherto zealous—the example of desertion is contagious. In the town which Templeton had formerly represented, and which he now almost commanded, a vacancy suddenly occurred—a candidate started on the opposition side and commenced a canvass; to the astonishment and panic of the Secretary of the Treasury, Templeton put forward no one, and his interest remained dormant. Lord Saxingham hurried to Lumley.

"My dear fellow, what is this?—what can your uncle be about? We shall lose this place—one of our strongholds. Bets run even."

"Why, you see, you have all behaved very ill to my uncle—I am really sorry for it, but I can do nothing."

"What, this confounded peerage! Will that content him, and nothing short of it?"

"Nothing."

"He must have it, by Jove!"

"And even that may come too late."

"Ha! do you think so?"

"Will you leave the matter to me?"

"Certainly—you are a monstrous clever fellow, and we all esteem you."

"Sit down and write as I dictate, my dear lord."

"Well," said Lord Saxingham, seating himself at Lumley's enormous writing-table—"well, go on."

"*My dear Mr. Templeton*——"

"Too familiar," said Lord Saxingham.

"Not a bit; go on."

"*My dear Mr. Templeton;*

"*We are anxious to secure your parliamentary influence in C***** to the proper quarter, namely to your own family, as the best defenders of the administration, which you honor by your support. We wish signally, at the same time, to express our confidence in your principles, and our gratitude for your countenance.*"

"D—d sour countenance!" muttered Lord Saxingham.

"*Accordingly*," continued Ferrers, "*as one whose connection with you permits the liberty, allow me to request that you will suffer our joint relation, Mr. Ferrers, to be put into immediate nomination.*"

Lord Saxingham threw down the pen and laughed for two minutes without ceasing. "Capital, Lumley, capital!—Very odd I did not think of it before."

"Each man for himself, and God for us all," returned Lumley, gravely; "pray go on, my dear lord."

"*We are sure you could not have a representative that would more faithfully reflect your own opinions and our interests. One word more. A creation of peers will probably take place in the spring, among which I am sure your name would be to his Majesty a gratifying addition; the title will of course be secured to your sons—and failing the latter, to your nephew.*

"*With great regard and respect,*

"*Truly yours,*

"SAXINGHAM."

"There, inscribe that, 'Private and confidential,' and send it express to my uncle's villa."

"It shall be done, my dear Lumley—and this contents me as much as it does you. You are really a man to do us credit. You think it will be arranged?"

"No doubt of it."

"Well, good day. Lumley, come to me when it is all settled: Florence is always glad to see you; she says no one amuses her more. And I am sure that is rare praise, for she is a strange girl,—quite a Timon in petticoats."

Away went Lord Saxingham.

"Florence glad to see me!" said Lumley, throwing his arms behind him, and striding to and fro the room—"Scheme the Second begins to smile upon me behind the advancing shadow of Scheme One. If I can but succeed in keeping away other suitors from my fair cousin until I am in a condition to propose myself, why I may carry off the greatest match in the three kingdoms. *Courage, mon brave Ferrers, courage!*"

It was late that evening when Ferrers arrived at his uncle's villa. He found Mrs. Templeton in the drawing-room seated at the piano. He entered gently; she did not hear him, and continued at the instrument. Her voice was so sweet and rich, her taste so pure, that Ferrers, who was a good judge of music,

stood in delighted surprise. Often as he had now been a visitor, even an inmate, at the house, he had never before heard Mrs. Templeton play any but sacred airs, and this was one of the popular songs of sentiment. He perceived that her feeling at last overpowered her voice, and she paused abruptly, and turning round, her face was so eloquent of emotion, that Ferrers was forcibly struck by its expression. He was not a man apt to feel curiosity for anything not immediately concerning himself; but he did feel curious about this melancholy and beautiful woman. There was in her usual aspect that inexpressible look of profound resignation which betokens a lasting remembrance of a bitter past: a prematurely blighted heart spoke in her eyes, her smile, her languid and joyless step. But she performed the routine of her quiet duties with a calm and conscientious regularity which showed that grief rather depressed than disturbed her thoughts. If her burden were heavy, custom seemed to have reconciled her to bear it without repining; and the emotion which Ferrers now traced in her soft and harmonious features was of a nature he had only once witnessed before—viz., on the first night he had seen her, when poetry which is the key of memory, had evidently opened a chamber haunted by mournful and troubled ghosts.

"Ah! dear madam," said Ferrers, advancing, as he found himself discovered. "I trust I do not disturb you. My visit is unseasonable; but my uncle—where is he?"

"He has been in town all the morning: he said he should dine out, and I now expect him every minute."

"You have been endeavoring to charm away the sense of his absence. Dare I ask you to continue to play? It is seldom that I hear a voice so sweet, and skill so consummate. You must have been instructed by the best Italian masters."

"No," said Mrs. Templeton, with a very slight color in her delicate cheek—"I learned young, and of one who loved music and felt it; but who was not a foreigner."

"Will you sing me that song again?—you give the words a beauty I never discovered in them; yet they (as well as the music itself) are but my poor friend whom Mr. Templeton does not like—Maltravers."

"Are they his also?" said Mrs. Templeton, with emotion; "it is strange I did not know it. I heard the air in the streets, and it struck me much. I inquired the name of the song and bought it—it is very strange!"

"What is strange?"

"That there is a kind of language in your friend's music and poetry which comes home to me, like words I have heard years ago! Is he young, this Mr. Maltravers?"

"Yes, he is still young."

"And, and——"

Here Mrs. Templeton was interrupted by the entrance of her husband. He held the letter from Lord Saxingham—it was yet unopened. He seemed moody; but that was common with him. He coldly shook hands with Lumley, nodded to his wife, found fault with the fire, and throwing himself into his easy-chair, said, "So, Lumley, I think I was a fool for taking your advice—and hanging back about this new election, I see by the evening papers that there is shortly to be a creation of peers. If I had shown activity on behalf of the government, I might have shamed them into gratitude."

"I think I was right, sir," replied Lumley; "public men are often alarmed into gratitude, seldom shamed into it. Firm votes, like old friends, are most valued when we think we are about to lose them; but what is that letter in your hand?"

"Oh, some begging petition, I suppose."

"Pardon me—it has an official look."

Templeton put on his spectacles, raised the letter, examined the address and seal, hastily opened it, and broke into an exclamation very like an oath: when he had concluded—"Give me your hand, nephew—the thing is settled—I am to have the peerage. You were right—ha, ha!—my dear wife, you will be my lady, think of that—arn't you glad?—why don't your ladyship smile? Where's the child—where is she, I say?"

"Gone to bed sir," said Mrs. Templeton," half frightened.

"Gone to bed! I must go and kiss her. Gone to bed, has she? Light that candle, Lumley." [Here Mr. Templeton rang the bell.] "John," said he, as the servant entered,—"John, tell James to go the first thing in the morning to Baxter's, and tell him not to paint my chariot till he hears from me. I must go kiss the child—I must, really."

"D—— the child," muttered Lumley, as after giving the candle to his uncle, he turned to the fire; "what the deuce has she got to do with the matter? Charming little girl—yours, madam! how I love her! My uncle dotes on her—no wonder!"

"He is, indeed, very, very fond of her," said Mrs. Templeton, with a sigh that seemed to come from the depth of her heart.

"Did he take a fancy to her before you were married?"

"Yes, I believe—oh yes, certainly."

"Her own father could not be more fond of her."

Mrs. Templeton made no answer but lighted her candle, and wishing Lumley good night, glided from the room.

"I wonder if my grave aunt and my grave uncle took a bite at the apple before they bought the right of the tree. It looks suspicious; yet no, it can't be; there is nothing of the seducer or the seductive about the old fellow. It is not likely—here he comes."

In came Templeton, and his eyes were moist, and his brow relaxed.

"And how is the little angel, sir?" asked Ferrers.

"She kissed me, though I woke her up; children are usually cross when awakened."

"Are they?—little dears! Well, sir, so I was right, then; may I see the letter?"

"There it is."

Ferrers drew his chair to the fire, and read his own production with all the satisfaction of an anonymous author.

"How kind!—how considerate!—how delicately put?—a double favor! But perhaps, after all, it does not express your wishes."

"In what way?'

"Why—why—about myself."

"*You!*—is there anything about *you* in it?—I did not observe *that*—let me see."

"Uncles never selfish!—mem. for common place-book!' thought Ferrers.

The uncle knit his brow as he reperused the letter. "This won't do, Lumley," said he, very shortly, when he had done.

"A seat in parliament is too much honor for a poor nephew, then, sir!" said Lumley, very bitterly, though he did not feel at all bitter; but it was the proper tone—"I have done all in my power to advance your ambition, and you will not even lend a hand to forward me one step in my career. But, forgive me, sir, I have no right to expect it."

"Lumley!" replied Templeton, kindly, "you mistake me. I think much more highly of you than I did—much: there is a steadiness, a sobriety about you most praiseworthy, and you shall go into parliament if you wish it; but not for C * * * * *. I will give my interest there to some other friend of the government, and in return they can give you a treasury borough! That is the same thing to you."

Lumley was agreeably surprised—he pressed his uncle's hand warmly, and thanked him cordially. Mr. Templeton proceeded to explain to him that it was inconvenient and expensive, sitting for places where one's family was known, and Lumley fully subscribed to all.

"As for the settlement of the peerage, that is all right," said Templeton; and then he sunk into a reverie, from which he broke joyously—"yes, that is all right. I have projects, objects—this may unite them all—nothing can be better—you will be the next lord—what—I say what title shall we have?"

"Oh, take a sounding one—you have very little landed property, I think?"

"Two thousand a-year in ——shire, bought a bargain."

"What's the name of the place?"

"Grubley."

"Lord Grubley!—Baron Grubley of Grubley—oh, atrocious! Who had the place before you?"

"Bought it of Mr. Sheepshanks—very old family."

"But surely some old Norman once had the place?"

"Norman, yes! Henry the Second gave it to his barber—Bertram Courval."

"That's it!—that's it!—Lord de Courval—singular concidence!—descent from the old line. Herald's college soon settle all that. Lord de Courval!—nothing can sound better. There must be a village or hamlet still called Courval about the property."

"I'm afraid not. There is Coddle End!"

"Coddle End!"—Goddle End!—the very thing, sir—the very thing—clear corruption! from Courval!—Lord de Courval of Courval! Superb! Ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Templeton, and he had hardly laughed before since he was thirty

The relations sate long and conversed familiarly. Ferrers slept at the villa, and his sleep was sound, for he thought little of plans once formed and half-executed; it was the hunt that kept him awake, and he slept like a hound when the prey was down. Not so Templeton, who did not close his eyes all night.—"Yes, yes," thought he, "I must get the fortune and the title in one line, by a prudent management. Ferrers deserves what I mean to do for him. Steady, good-natured, frank, and will get on—yes, yes, I see it all. Meanwhile I did well to prevent his standing for C * * * * *; might pick up gossip about Mrs. T., and other things that might be unpleasant. Ah, I'm a shrewd fellow!

CHAPTER III.

"*Lausun.*—There, Marquis, there, I've done it.
Montespan.—Done it! yes! Nice doings!"
—*The Duchess de la Valliere.*

LUMLEY hastened to strike while the iron was hot. The next morning he went straight to the Treasury—saw the managing secretary, a clever, sharp man, who, like Ferrers, carried off intrigue and manœuvre by a blunt, careless, bluff manner.

Ferrers announced that he was to stand for the free, respectable, open city of C * * * * *, with an electoral population of 2500—a very showy place it was for a member in the old ante-reform times, and was considered a thoroughly independent borough. The secretary congratulated and complimented him.

"We have had losses lately in *our* elections among the larger constituencies," said Lumley.

"We have indeed—three towns lost in the last six months. Members do die so very unseasonably!"

"Is Lord Staunch yet provided for?" asked Lumley. Now Lord Staunch was one of the popular show-fight great guns of the administration—not in office, but that most useful person to all governments, an out-and-out supporter upon the most independent principles—who was known to have refused place, and to value himself on independence—a man who helped the government over the stile when it was seized with a temporary lameness, and who carried "great weight with him in the country." Lord Staunch had foolishly thrown up a close borough in order to contest a large city, and had failed in the attempt. His failure was everywhere cited as a proof of the growing unpopularity of ministers.

"Is Lord Staunch yet provided for?" asked Lumley.

"Why, he must have his old seat—Three-Oaks. Three-Oaks is a nice, quiet little place; most respectable constituency—all Staunch's own family."

"Just the thing for him; yet, 'tis a pity that he did not wait to stand for C * * * * *; my uncle's interest would have secured him."

"Ah, I thought so the moment C * * * * * was vacant. However, it is too late now."

"It would be a great triumph if Lord Staunch could show that a large constituency volunteered to elect him without expense."

"Without expense!—Ah, yes, indeed!—It would prove that purity of election still exists—that British institutions are still upheld."

"It might be done, Mr.——"

"Why, I thought that you——"

"Were to stand—that is true—and it will be difficult to manage my uncle; but he loves me much—you know I am his heir—I believe I could do it; that is, if you think it would be *a very great* advantage to the party, and *a very great service* to the government."

"Why, Mr. Ferrers, it would indeed be both."

"And in that case I could have Three-Oaks."

"I see—exactly so; but to give up so respectable a seat—really it is a sacrifice."

"Say no more, it shall be done. A deputation shall wait on Lord Staunch directly. I will see my uncle, and a despatch shall be sent down to C * * * * * to-night; at least I hope so. I must not be too confident. My uncle is and old man, nobody but myself can manage him; I'll go this instant."

"You may be sure your kindness will be duly appreciated."

Lumley shook hands cordially with the secretary and retired. The secretary was not "humbugged," nor did Lumley expect he should be. But the secretary noted this of Lumley Ferrers, (and that gentleman's object was gained), that Lumley Ferrers was a man who looked out for office, and if he did tolerably well in

parliament, that Lumley Ferrers was a man who ought to be *pushed.*

Very shortly afterwards, the *Gazette* announced the election of Lord Staunch for C * * * * *, after a sharp but decisive contest. The ministerial journals rang with exulting pæans; the opposition ones called the electors of C * * * * * all manner of hard names, and declared that Mr. Stout, Lord Staunch's opponest, would petition, which he never did. In the midst of the hubbub, Mr. Lumley Ferrers quietly and unobservedly crept into the representation of Three-Oaks.

On the night of his election he went to Lord Saxingham's; but what there happened deserves another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

"Je connois des princes du sang, des princes étrangers, des grands seigneurs, des ministres d'état, des magistrats, et des philosophes qui fileroient pour l'amour de vous. En pouvez-vous demander d'avantage?" *—*Lettres de Madame de Sevigne.*

"*Lindore.* I——I believe it will choke me. I'm in love. * * *
Now hold your tongue. Hold your tongue, I say.
"*Dalner.* You in love! Ha! ha!
"*Lind.* There, he laughs.
"*Dal.* No; I am really sorry for you."
—*German Play* (*False Delicacy*).

* * * "What is here?
Gold."
—SHAKESPEARE.

It happened that that evening Maltravers had, for the first time accepted one of many invitations with which Lord Saxingham had honored him. His lordship and Maltravers were of different political parties, nor were they in other respects adapted to each other. Lord Saxingham was a clever man in his way, but worldly even to a proverb among worldly people. That "man was born to walk erect and look upon the stars," is an eloquent fallacy that Lord Saxingham might suffice to disprove. He seemed born to walk with a stoop; and if he ever looked upon any stars, they were those which go with a garter. Though of celebrated and historical ancestry, great rank, and some personal reputation, he had all the ambition of a *parvenu.* He had a strong regard for office, not so much from the sublime affection for that sublime thing,—power over the destinies of a glorious nation, as because it added to that vulgar thing—importance in his own set.

He looked on his cabinet uniform as a beadle looks on his gold lace. He also liked patronage, secured good things to distant connections, got on his family to the remotest degree of relationship; in short, he was of the earth, earthy. He did not comprehend Maltravers; and Maltravers, who every day grew prouder and prouder, despised him. Still Lord Saxingham was told that Maltravers was a rising man, and he thought it well to be civil to rising men, of whatever party; besides, his vanity was flattered by having men who are talked of in his train. He was too busy and too great a personage to think Maltravers could be other than sincere, when he declared himself, in his notes, "very sorry," or "much concerned," to forego the honor of dining with Lord Saxingham on the, etc., etc.; and therefore continued his invitations, till Maltravers, from that fatality which undoubtedly regulates and controls us, at last accepted the proffered distinction.

He arrived late—most of the guests were assembled; and, after exchanging a few words with his host, Ernest fell back in the general group, and found himself in the immediate neighborhood of Lady Florence Lascelles. This lady had never much pleased Maltravers, for he was not fond of masculine or coquettish heroines, and Lady Florence seemed to him to merit both epithets; therefore, though he had met her often since the first day he had been introduced to her, he had usually contented himself with a distant bow or a passing salutation. But now, as he turned round and saw her—she was, for a miracle, sitting alone—and in her most dazzling and noble countenance there was so evident an appearance of ill-health, that he was struck and touched by it. In fact, beautiful as she was, both in face and form, there was something in the eye and the bloom of Lady Florence, which a skilful physician would have seen with prophetic pain. And, whenever occasional illness paled the roses of the cheek, and sobered the play of the lips, even an ordinary observer would have thought of the old commonplace proverb—"that the brightest beauty has the briefest

* I know princes of the blood, foreign princes, great lords, ministers of state, magistrates, and philosophers who would even spin for love of you.
What can you ask more?

life." It was some sentiment of this kind, perhaps, that now awakened the sympathy of Maltravers. He addressed her with more marked courtesy than usual, and took a seat by her side.

"You have been to the House, I suppose, Mr. Maltravers?" said Lady Florence.

"Yes, for a short time; it is not one of our field-nights—no division was expected; and by this time, I dare say, the House has been counted out."

"Do you like the life?"

"It has excitement," said Maltravers, evasively.

"And the excitement is of a noble character?"

"Scarcely so, I fear—it is so made up of mean and malignant motives,—there is in it so much jealousy of our friends, so much unfairness to our enemies;—such readiness to attribute to others the basest objects,—such willingness to avail ourselves of the poorest stratagems!—The ends may be great, but the means are very ambiguous."

"I knew *you* would feel this," exclaimed Lady Florence, with a heightened color."

"Did you?" said Maltravers, rather interested as well as surprised. "I scarcely imagined it possible that you would deign to divine secrets so insignificant."

"You did not do *me* justice then," returned Lady Florence, with an arch yet half-painful smile; "for—but I was about to be impertinent."

"Nay, say on."

"For—then—I do not imagine you to be one apt to do injustice to yourself."

"Oh! you consider me presumptuous and arrogant; but that is common report, and you do right perhaps to believe it."

"Was there ever any one unconscious of his own merit?" asked Lady Florence, proudly. "They who distrust themselves have good reason for it."

"You seek to cure the wound you inflicted," returned Maltravers, smiling.

"No; what I said was an apology for myself, as well as for you. You need no words to vindicate you; you are a man, and can bear out all arrogance with the royal motto—*Dieu et mon droit.* With you, deeds can support pretension; but I am a woman—it was a mistake of Nature!"

"But what triumphs that man can achieve bring so immediate, so palpable a reward as those won by a woman, beautiful and admired—who finds every room an empire, and every class her subjects?"

"It is a despicable realm."

"What—to command—to win—to bow to your worship—the greatest, and the highest, and the sternest; to own slaves in those whom men recognize as their lords! Is such power despicable? If so, what power is to be envied?"

Lady Florence turned quickly round to Maltravers, and fixed on him her large dark eyes, as if she would read into his very heart. She turned away with a blush and a slight frown—"There is mockery on your lip," said she.

Before Maltravers could answer, dinner was announced, and a foreign ambassador claimed the hand of Lady Florence. Maltravers saw a young lady, with gold oats in her very light hair, fall to his lot, and descended to the dining-room, thinking more of Lady Florence Lascelles than he had ever done before.

He happened to sit nearly opposite to the young mistress of the house, (Lord Saxingham, as the reader knows, was a widower, and Lady Florence an only chiid;) and Maltravers was that day in one of those felicitous moods in which our animal spirits search, and carry up, as it were, to the surface, our intellectual gifts, and acquisitions. He conversed generally and happily; but once, when he turned his eyes to appeal to Lady Florence for her opinion on some point in discussion, he caught her gaze fixed upon him with an expression that checked the current of his gaiety, and cast him into curious and bewildered reverie. In that gaze there was earnest and cordial admiration; but it was mixed with so much mournfulness, that the admiration lost its eloquence, and he who noticed it was rather saddened than flattered.

After dinner, when Maltravers sought the drawing-rooms, he found them filled with the customary mob of good society. In one corner he discovered Castruccio Cesarini, playing on a guitar, slung across his breast with a blue riband. The Italian sang well: many young ladies were grouped round him, amongst others, Florence Lascelles. Maltravers, fond as he was of music, looked upon Castruccio's performance as a disagreeable exhibition. He had a Quixotic idea of the dignity of

talent; and though himself of a musical science, and a melody of voice that would have thrown the room into ecstacies, he would as soon have turned juggler or tumbler for polite amusement, as contended for the bravos of a drawing-room. It was because he was one of the proudest men in the world, that Maltravers was one of the least *vain*. He did not care a rush for applause in small things. But Cesarini would have summoned the whole world to see him play at push-pin, if he thought he played it well.

"Beautiful! divine! charming!" — cried the young ladies, as Cesarini ceased; and Maltravers observed that Florence praised more earnestly than the rest, and that Cesarini's dark eyes sparkled, and his pale cheek flushed with unwonted brilliancy. Florence turned to Maltravers, and the Italian, following her eyes, frowned darkly.

"You know the Signor Cesarini," said Florence, joining Maltravers. "He is an interesting and gifted person."

'Unquestionably. I grieve to see him wasting his talents upon a soil that may yield a few short-lived flowers, without one useful plant, or productive fruit."

"He enjoys the passing hour, Mr. Maltravers; and sometimes when I see the mortifications that await sterner labor, I think he is right."

"Hush!" said Maltravers; "his eyes are on us—he is listening breathlessly for every word you utter. I fear that you have made an unconscious conquest of a poet's heart; and if so, he purchases the enjoyment of the passing hour at a fearful price."

"Nay," said Lady Florence, indifferently, "he is one of those to whom the fancy supplies the place of the heart. And if I give him an inspiration, it will be an equal luxury to him whether his lyre be strung to hope or disappointment. The sweetness of his verses will compensate to him for any bitterness in actual life."

"There are two kinds of Love," answered Maltravers,—"love and self-love; the wounds of the last are often most incurable in those who appear least vulnerable to the first. Ah, Lady Florence were I privileged to play the monitor, I would venture on one warning, however much it might offend you."

"And that is——"

"To forbear coquetry."

Maltravers smiled as he spoke, but it was gravely—and at the same time he moved gently away. But Lady Florence laid her hand on his arm.

"Mr. Maltravers," said she, very softly, and with a kind of faltering in her tone, "am I wrong to say that I am anxious for your good opinion? Do not judge me harshly. I am soured, discontented, unhappy. I have no sympathy with the world. These men whom I see around me—what are they? The mass of them unfeeling and silken egotists—ill-judging, ill-educated, well-dressed: the few who are called distinguished—how selfish in their ambition, how passionless in their pursuits! Am I to be blamed if I sometimes exert a power over such as these, which rather proves my scorn of them than my own vanity?"

"I have no right to argue with you."

"Yes, argue with me, convince me, guide me — Heaven knows that impetuous and haughty as I am, I need a guide,"—and Lady Florence's eyes swam with tears. Ernest's prejudices against her were greatly shaken: he was even somewhat dazzled by her beauty, and touched by her unexpected gentleness; but still, his heart was not assailed, and he replied almost coldly, after a short pause,—

"Dear Lady Florence, look round the world —who so much to be envied as yourself? What sources of happiness and pride are open to you! Why, then, make to yourself causes of discontent?—why be scornful of those who cross not your path? Why not look with charity upon God's less endowed children, beneath you as they may seem? What consolation have you in hurting the hearts or the vanities of others? Do you raise yourself even in your own estimation? You affect to be above your sex—yet what character do you despise more in women than that which you assume? Semiramis should not be a coquette! There now, I have offended you—I confess I am very rude."

"I am not offended," said Florence, almost struggling with her tears; and she added inly, "Ah, I am too happy!"—There are some lips from which even the proudest women love to hear the censure which appears to disprove indifference.

It was at this time that Lumley Ferrers, flushed with the success of his schemes and

projects, entered the room; and his quick eye fell upon that corner, in which he detected what appeared to him a very alarming flirtation between his rich cousin and Ernest Maltravers. He advanced to the spot, and with his customary frankness, extended a hand to each.

"Ah, my dear and fair cousin, give me your congratulations, and ask me for my first frank, to be bound up in a collection of autographs by distinguished senators—it will sell high oue of these days. Your most obedient, Mr. Maltravers;—how we shall laugh in our sleeves at the humbug of politics, when you and I, the best friends in the world, sit *vis-à-vis* on opposite benches. But why, Lady Florence, have you never introduced me to your pet Italian? *Allons!* I am his match in Alfieri, whom of course, he swears by, and whose verses, by the way, seem cut out of box-wood—the hardest material for turning off that sort of machinery that invention ever hit on."

Thus saying, Ferrers contrived, as he thought, very cleverly, to divide a pair that he much feared were justly formed to meet by nature—and, to his great joy, Maltravers shortly afterwards withdrew.

Ferrers, with the happy ease that belonged to his complacent, though plotting character, soon made Cesarini at home with him; and two or three slighting expressions which the former dropped with respect to Maltravers, coupled with some outrageous compliments to the Italian, completely won the heart of the poet. The brilliant Florence was more silent and subdued than usual; and her voice was softer, though graver when she replied to Castruccio's eloquent appeals. Castruccio was one of those men who *talk fine*. By degrees, Lumley lapsed into silence, and listened to what took place between Lady Florence and the Italian, while appearing to be deep in "The Views of the Rhine," which lay on the table.

"Ah," said the latter, in his soft native tongue, "could you know how I watch every shade of that countenance which makes my heaven! Is it clouded! night is with me!—is it radiant, I am the Persian gazing on the sun!"

"Why do you speak thus to me? were you not a poet, I might be angry."

"You were not angry when the English poet, that cold Maltravers, spoke to you perhaps as boldly."

Lady Florence drew up her haughty head. "Signor," said she, checking, however, her first impulse, and with mildness, "Mr. Maltravers neither flatters nor——"

"Presumes, you were about to say," said Cesarini, grinding his teeth. "But it is well—once you were less chilling to the utterance of my deep devotion."

"Never, Signor Cesarini, never—but when I thought it was but the common gallantry of your nation: let me think so still."

"No, proud woman," said Cesarini, fiercely, "no—hear the truth."

Lady Florence rose indignantly.

"Hear me," he continued. "I—I the poor foreigner, the despised minstrel, dare lift up my eyes to you! I love you!"

Never had Florence Lascelles been so humiliated and confounded. However she might have amused herself with the vanity of Cesarini, she had not given him, as she thought, the warrant to address her—the great Lady Florence, the prize of dukes and princes—in this hardy manner; she almost fancied him insane. But the next moment she recalled the warning of Maltravers, and felt as if her punishment had commenced.

"You will think and speak more calmly, sir, when we meet again," and so saying she swept away.

Cesarini remained rooted to the spot, with his dark countenance expressing such passions as are rarely seen in the aspect of civilized men.

"Where do you lodge, Signor Cesarini?" asked the bland, familiar voice of Ferrers. "Let us walk part of the way together—that is, when you are tired of these hot rooms."

Cesarini groaned. "You are ill," continued Ferrers; "the air will revive you — come." He glided from the room, and the Italian mechanically followed him. They walked together for some moments in silence, side by side, in a clear, lovely, moonlight night. At length Ferrers said, "Pardon me, my dear Signor, but you may already have observed that I am a very frank, odd sort of fellow. I see you are caught by the charms of my cruel cousin. Can I serve you in any way?"

A man at all acquainted with the world in which we live would have been suspicious of

such cordiality in the cousin of an heiress, towards a very unsuitable aspirant. But Cesarini, like many indifferent poets, (but like few good ones), had no common sense. He thought it quite natural that a man who admired his poetry so much as Lumley had declared he did, should take a lively interest in his welfare; and he therefore replied warmly, "Oh, sir, this is indeed a crushing blow: I dreamed she loved me. She was ever flattering and gentle when she spoke to me, and in verse already I had told her of my love, and met with no rebuke."

"Did your verses really and plainly declare love, and in your own person?"

"Why, the sentiment was veiled perhaps—put into the mouth of a fictitious character, or conveyed in an allegory."

"Oh!" ejaculated Ferrers, thinking it very likely that the gorgeous Florence, hymned by a thousand bards, had done little more than cast a glance over the lines that had cost poor Cesarini such anxious toil, and inspired him with such daring hope. "Oh!—and to-night she was more severe!—she is a terrible coquette, *la bella Florence!* But perhaps you have a rival."

"I feel it—I saw it—I know it."

"Whom do you suspect?"

"That accursed Maltravers! He crosses me in every path—my spirit quails beneath his whenever we encounter. I read my doom."

"If it be Maltravers," said Ferrers, gravely, "the danger cannot be great. Florence has seen but little of him, and he does not admire her much; but she is a great match, and he is ambitious. We must guard against this betimes, Cesarini—for know that I dislike Maltravers as much as you do, and will cheerfully aid you in any plan to blight his hopes in that quarter."

"Generous, noble friend!—yet he is richer, better-born than I."

"That may be; but to one in Lady Florence's position, all minor grades of rank in her aspirants seem pretty well levelled. Come, I don't tell you that I would not sooner she married a countryman and an equal—but I have taken a liking to you, and I detest Maltravers. She is very romantic—fond of poetry to a passion—writes it herself, I fancy. Oh, you'll just suit her; but, alas! how will you see her?"

"See her! What mean you?"

"Why, have you declared love to-night? I thought I overheard you. Can you for a moment fancy that, after such an avowal, Lady Florence will again receive you—that is, if she mean to reject your suit?"

"Fool that I was! But no—she must, she shall."

"Be persuaded;—in this country violence will not do. Take my advice, write an humble apology, confess your fault, invoke her pity; and, declaring that you renounce for ever the character of a lover, implore still to be acknowledged as a friend. Be quiet now,—hear me out; I am older than you; I know my cousin; this will pique her; your modesty will soothe, while your coldness will arouse, her vanity. Meanwhile you will watch the progress of Maltravers—I will be by your elbow; and between us, to use a homely phrase,—we will do for him. Then you may have your opportunity—clear stage and fair play."

Cesarini was at first rebellious; but at length even he saw the policy of the advice. But Lumley would not leave him till the advice was adopted. He made Castruccio accompany him to a club, dictated the letter to Florence, and undertook its charge. This was not all.

"It is also necessary," said Lumley, after a short but thoughtful silence, "that you should write to Maltravers."

"And for what?"

"I have my reasons. Ask him, in a frank and friendly spirit, his opinion of Lady Florence; state your belief that she loves you, and inquire ingenously what he thinks your chances of happiness in such a union."

"By why this?"

"His answer may be useful," returned Lumley, musingly. "Stay, I will dictate the letter."

Cesarini wondered and hesitated, but there was that about Lumley Ferrers which had already obtained command over the weak and passionate poet. He wrote, therefore, as Lumley dictated, beginning with some common-place doubts as to the happiness of marriage in general, excusing himself for his recent coldness towards Maltravers, and asking him his confidential opinion both as to Lady Florence's character and his own chances of success.

This letter, like the former one, Lumley sealed and despatched.

"You perceive," he then said briefly to Cesarini, "that it is the object of this letter to entrap Maltravers into some plain and honest avowal of his dislike to Lady Florence —we may make good use of such expressions hereafter, if he should ever prove a rival. And now go home to rest—you look exhausted. Adieu, my new friend."

"I have long had a presentiment," said Lumley to his councillor SELF, as he walked to Great George Street, "that that wild girl has conceived a romantic fancy for Maltravers. But I can easily prevent such an accident ripening into misfortune. Meanwhile, I have secured a tool, if I want one. By Jove, what an ass that poet is! But so was Cassio; yet Iago made use of him. If Iago had been born now, and dropped that foolish fancy for revenge, what a glorious fellow he would have been! Prime minister at least!"

Pale, haggard, exhausted, Castruccio Cesarini traversing a length of way, arrived at last at a miserable lodging in the suberb of Chelsea. His fortune was now gone—gone in supplying the poorest food to a craving and imbecile vanity; gone, that its owner might seem what Nature never meant him for—the elegant Lothario—the graceful man of pleasure—the troubadour of modern life! —gone in horses and jewels, and fine clothes, and gaming, and printing unsaleable poems on gilt-edged vellum;—gone, that he might be not a greater but a more fashionable man than Ernest Maltravers! Such is the common destiny of those poor adventurers who confine fame to boudoirs and saloons. No matter, whether they be poets or dandies, wealthy *parvenus* or aristocratic cadets, all equally prove the adage that the wrong paths to reputation are strewed with the wrecks of peace, fortune, happiness, and too often honor! And yet this poor young man had dared to hope for the hand of Florence Lascelles! He had the common notion of foreigners, that English girls marry for love, are very romantic; that, within the three seas, heiresses are as plentiful as black-berries; and for the rest, his vanity had been so pampered, that it now insinuated itself into every fibre of his intellectual and moral system.

Cesarini looked cautiously round, as he arrived at his door; for he fancied that, even in that obscure place, persons might be anxious to catch a glimpse of the celebrated poet; and he concealed his residence from all; dined on a roll when he did not dine out, and left his address at "The Travellers'." He looked round, I say, and he did observe a tall figure, wrapped in a cloak, that had, indeed, followed him from a distant and more populous part of the town. But the figure turned round, and vanished instantly. Cesarini mounted to his second floor. And about the middle of the next day, a messenger left a letter at his door, containing one hundred pounds in a blank envelope. Cesarini knew not the writing of the address; his pride was deeply wounded; amidst all his penury, he had not even applied to his own sister. Could it come from her—from De Montaigne? He was lost in conjecture. He put the remittance aside for a few days, for he had something fine in him, the poor poet!—but bills grew pressing, and necessity hath no law.

Two days afterwards, Cesarini brought to Ferrers the answer he had received from Mal travers. Lumley had rightly foreseen that the high spirit of Ernest would conceive some indignation at the coquetry of Florence in beguiling the Italian into hopes never to be realized—that he would express himself openly and warmly. He did so, however, with more gentleness than Lumley had anticipated.

"This is not exactly the thing," said Ferrers, after twice reading the letter; "still it may hereafter be a strong card in our hands—we will keep it."

"So saying, he locked up the letter in his desk, and Cesarini soon forgot its existence.

CHAPTER V.

"She was a phantom of delight,
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition sent,
To be a moment's ornament."—WORDSWORTH.

MALTRAVERS did not see Lady Florence again for some weeks; meanwhile, Lumley Ferrers made his *début* in parliament. Rigidly adhering to his plan of acting on a deliberate system; and not prone to overrate himself, Mr. Ferrers did not, like most promising new mem-

bers, try the hazardous ordeal of a great first speech. Though bold, fluent and ready, he was not eloquent; and he knew that on great occasions, when great speeches are wanted, great guns like to have the fire to themselves. Neither did he split upon the opposite rock of "promising young men," who stick to "the business of the house" like leeches, and quibble on details; in return for which labor, they are generally voted bores, who can never do anything remarkable. But he spoke frequently, shortly, courageously, and with a strong dash of good-humored personality. He was the man whom a minister could get to say something which other people did not like to say; and he did so with a frank fearlessness that carried off any seeming violation of good taste. He soon became a very popular speaker in the parliamentary clique; especially with the gentlemen who crowd the bar, and never want to hear the argument of the debate.

Between him and Maltravers a visible coldness now existed; for the latter looked upon his old friend (whose principles of logic led him even to republicanism, and who had been accustomed to accuse Ernest of temporizing with plain truths, if he demurred to their application to artificial states of society) as a cold-blooded and hypocritical adventurer; while Ferrers, seeing that Ernest could now be of no further use to him, was willing enough to drop a profitless intimacy. Nay, he thought it would be wise to pick a quarrel with him, if possible, as the best means of banishing a supposed rival from the house of his noble relation, Lord Saxingham. But no opportunity for that step presented itself; so Lumley kept a fit of convenient rudeness, or an impromptu sarcasm in reserve, if ever it should be wanted.

The season and the session were alike drawing to a close, when Maltravers received a pressing invitation from Cleveland to spend a week at his villa, which he assured Ernest would be full of agreeable people; and as all business productive of debate or division was over, Maltravers was glad to obtain fresh air, and a change of scene. Accordingly, he sent down his luggage and favorite books, and, one afternoon in early August, rode alone towards Temple Grove. He was much dissatisfied, perhaps disappointed, with his experience of public life; and with his high-wrought and over-refining views of the deficiences of others more prominent, he was in a humor to mingle also censure of himself, for having yielded too much to the doubts and scruples that often in the early part of their career beset the honest and sincere, in the turbulent whirl of politics, and ever tend to make the robust hues that should belong to action

> "Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.

His mind was working its way slowly towards those conclusions, which sometimes ripen the best practical men out of the most exalted theorists, and perhaps he saw before him the pleasing prospect flattering exhibited to another, when he complained of being too honest for party, viz., "of becoming a very pretty rascal in time!"

For several weeks he had not heard from his unknown correspondent, and the time was come when he missed those letters, now continued for more than two years; and which, in their eloquent mixture of complaint, exhortation, despondent gloom, and declamatory enthusiasm; had often soothed him in dejection, and made him more sensible of triumph. While revolving in his mind thoughts connected with these subjects—and, somehow or other, with his more ambitious reveries were always mingled musings of curiosity respecting his correspondent—he was struck by the beauty of a little girl; of about eleven years old, who was walking with a female attendant on the footpath that skirted the road. I said that he was struck by her beauty, but that is a wrong expression; it was rather the charm of her countenance than the perfection of her features which arrested the gaze of Maltravers—a charm that might not have existed for others, but was inexpressively attractive to him, and was so much apart from the vulgar fascination of mere beauty, that it would have equally touched a chord at his heart, if coupled with homely features or a bloomless cheek. This charm was in a wonderful innocence and dove-like softness of expression.

We all form to ourselves some *beau idéal* of the "fair spirit" we desire as our earthly "minister," and somewhat capriciously gauge and proportion our admiration of living shapes according as the *beau idéal* is more or less embodied or approached. Beauty, of a stamp that is not familiar to the dreams of our fancy,

may win the cold homage of our judgment, while a look, a feature, a something that realizes and calls up a boyish vision, and assimilates even distinctly to the picture we wear within us, has a loveliness peculiar to our eyes, and kindles an emotion that almost seems to belong to memory. It is this which the Platonists felt when they wildly supposed that souls attracted to each other on earth had been united in an earlier being and a diviner sphere; and there was is the young face on which Ernest gazed precisely this ineffable harmony with his preconceived notions of the Beautiful. Many a nightly and noonday revery was realized in those mild yet smiling eyes of the darkest blue; in that ingenuous breadth of brow, with its slightly pencilled arches, and the nose, not cut in that sharp and clear symmetry which looks as lovely in marble, but usually gives to flesh and blood a decided and hard character, that better becomes the sterner than the gentler sex—no; not moulded in the pure Grecian, nor in the pure Roman cast; but small, delicate, with the least possible inclination to turn upward, that was only to be detected in one position of the head, and served to give a prettier archness to the sweet, flexile, lips, which, from the gentleness of their repose, seemed to smile unconsciously, but rather from a happy constitutional serenity than from the giddiness of mirth. Such was the character of this fair child's countenance, on which Maltravers turned and gazed involuntarily and reverently, with something of the admiring delight with which we look upon the Virgin of a Raffaelle, or the sunset landscape of a Claude. The girl did not appear to feel any premature coquetry at the evident, though respectful, admiration she excited. She met the eyes bent upon her, brilliant and eloquent as they were, with a fearless and unsuspecting gaze, and pointed out to her companion, with all a child's quick and unrestrained impulse, the shining and raven gloss, the arched and haughty neck, of Ernest's beautiful Arabian.

Now there happened between Maltravers and the young object of his admiration a little adventure, which served, perhaps, to fix in her recollection this short encounter with a stranger; for certain it is, that, years after, she did remember both the circumstances of the adventure and the features of Maltravers. She wore one of those large straw-hats which look so pretty upon children, and the warmth of the day made her untie the strings which confined it. A gentle breeze arose, as by a turn in the road the country became more open, and suddenly wafted the hat from its proper post—almost to the hoofs of Ernest's horse. The child naturally made a spring forward to arrest the deserter, and her foot slipped down the bank, which was rather steeply raised above the road; she uttered a low cry of pain. To dismount—to regain the prize—and to restore it to its owner, was, with Ernest, the work of a moment; the poor girl had twisted her ankle, and was leaning upon her servant for support. But when she saw the anxiety, and almost the alarm, upon the stranger's face (and her exclamation of pain had literally thrilled his heart—so much and so unaccountably had she excited his interest), she made an effort at self-control, not common at her years, and, with a forced smile, assured him she was not much hurt—that it was nothing—that she was just at home.

"Oh, miss!" said the servant, "I am sure you are very bad. Dear heart, how angry master will be! It was not my fault; was it, sir?"

"Oh, no, it was not your fault, Margaret; don't be frightened—papa shan't blame you. But I'm much better now." So saying, she tried to walk; but the effort was vain—she turned yet more pale, and though she struggled to prevent a shriek, the tears rolled down he cheeks.

It was very odd, but Maltravers had never felt more touched—the tears stood in his own eyes; he longed to carry her in his arms, but, child, as she was, a strange kind of nervous timidity forbade him. Margaret, perhaps, expected it of him, for she looked hard in his face, before she attempted a burthen; to which being a small, slight person, she was by no means equal. However, after a pause, she took up her charge, who, ashamed of her tears, and almost overcome with pain, nestled her head in the woman's bosom, and Maltravers walked by her side, while his docile and well-trained horse followed at a distance, every now and then putting its fore-legs on the bank, and cropping away a mouthful of leaves from the hedge-row.

"Oh, Margaret!" said the little sufferer. "I cannot bear it—indeed I cannot."

And Maltravers observed that Margaret had permitted the lame foot to hang down unsupported, so that the pain must indeed have been scarcely bearable. He could restrain himself no longer.

"You are not strong enough to carry her," said he, sharply, to the servant; and the next moment the child was in his arms. Oh, with what anxious tenderness he bore her! and he was so happy when she turned her face to him and smiled, and told him she now scarcely felt the pain. If it were possible to be in love with a child of eleven years old, Maltravers was almost in love. His pulses trembled as he felt her pure breath on his cheek, and her rich, beautiful hair was waved by the breeze across his lips. He hushed his voice to a whisper as he poured forth all the soothing and comforting expressions, which give a natural eloquence to persons fond of children—and Ernest Maltravers was the ideal of children;—he understood and sympathized with them; he had a great deal of the child himself, beneath the rough and cold husk of his proud reserve. At length they came to a lodge, and Margaret, eagerly inquiring "whether master and missus were at home," seemed delighted to hear they were not.

Ernest, however, insisted on bearing his charge across the lawn to the house, which, like most suburban villas, was but a stone's throw from the lodge; and, receiving the most positive promise that surgical advice should be immediately sent for, he was forced to content himself with laying the sufferer on a sofa in the drawing-room; and she thanked him so prettily, and assured him she was so much easier, that he would have given the world to kiss her. The child had completed her conquest over him, by being above the child's ordinary littleness of making the worst of things, in order to obtain the consequence and dignity of being pitied—she was evidently unselfish and considerate for others. He did kiss her, but it was the hand that he kissed, and no cavalier ever kissed his lady's hand with more respect; and then, for the first time, the child blushed—then, for the first time, she felt as if the day would come when she should be a child no longer! Why was this?—perhaps because it is an era in life—the first sign of a tenderness that inspires respect, not familiarty!

"If ever again I could be in love," said Maltravers, as he spurred on his road, "I really think it would be with that exquisite child. My feeling is more like that of love at first sight, than any emotion which beauty ever caused in me. Alice—Valerie—no; the *first* sight of them did not:—but what folly is this!—a child of eleven—and I verging upon thirty!"

Still, however, folly as it might be, the image of that young girl haunted Maltravers for many days; till change of scene, the distractions of society, the grave thoughts of manhood, and, above all, a series of exciting circumstances about to be narrated, gradually obliterated a a strange and most delightful impression. He had learned, however, that Mr. Templeton was the proprietor of the villa, which was the child's home. He wrote to Ferrers, to narrate the incident, and to inquire after the sufferer. In due time he heard from that gentleman that the child was recovered, and gone with Mr. and Mrs. Templeton to Brighton, for change of air and sea-bathing.

BOOK EIGHTH.

Ἐνθὰ——Παλλὰς ἁμολε καὶ
Ἀμιλίφρων. Κύπρις.—EURIP. *Iphig. in Aul.* 1. 135.

Whither come Wisdom's queen
And the snare-weaving Love.

CHAPTER I.

"Notidiam primosque gradus vicinia fecit." —OVID.

CLEVELAND'S villa *was* full, and of persons usually called agreeable. Amongst the rest was Lady Florence Lascelles. The wise old man had ever counselled Maltravers not to marry too young; but neither did he wish him to put off that momentous epoch of life till all the bloom of heart and emotion was past away. He thought, with the old lawgivers, that thirty was the happy age for forming a connection, in the choice of which the reason of manhood, ought, perhaps, to be blended the passion of of youth. And he saw that few men were more capable than Maltravers of the true enjoyments of domestic life. He had long thought, also, that none were more calculated to sympathize with Ernest's views, and appreciate his peculiar character, than the gifted and brilliant Florence Lascelles. Cleveland looked with toleration on her many eccentricities of thought and conduct,—eccentricities which he imagined would rapidly melt away beneath the influence of that attachment which usually operates so great a change in women; and, where it is strongly and intensely felt, moulds even those of the most obstinate character into compliance or similitude with the sentiments or habits of its object.

The stately self-control of Maltravers was, he conceived, precisely that quality that gives to men an unconscious command over the very thoughts of the woman whose affection they win: while, on the other hand, he hoped that the fancy and enthusiasm of Florence would tend to render sharper and more practical an ambition, which seemed to the sober man of the world too apt to refine upon the means, and to *cui bono* the objects, of worldly distinction. Besides, Cleveland was one who thoroughly appreciated the advantages of wealth and station; and the rank and the dower of Florence were such as would force Maltravers into a position in social life, which could not fail to make new exactions upon talents which Cleveland fancied were precisely those adapted rather to command than to serve. In Ferrers he recognized a man to *get* into power—in Maltravers one by whom power, if ever attained, would be wielded with dignity, and exerted for great uses. Something, therefore higher than mere covetousness for the vulgar interests of Maltravers, made Cleveland desire to secure to him the heart and hand of the great heiress; and he fancied that, whatever might be the obstacle. it would not be in the will of Lady Florence herself. He prudently resolved, however, to leave matters to their natural course. He hinted nothing to one party or the other. No place for falling in love like a large country-house, and no time for it, amongst the indolent well-born, like the close of a London season, when, jaded by small cares, and sickened of hollow intimacies, even the coldest may well yearn for the tones of affection—the excitement of an honest emotion.

Somehow or other it happened that Florence and Ernest, after the first day or two, were constantly thrown together. She rode on horseback and Maltravers was by her side—they made excursions on the river, and they sat on the same bench in the gliding pleasure

boat. In the evenings the younger guests, with the assistance of the neighboring families, often got up a dance, in a temporary pavilion built out of the dining-room. Ernest never danced. Florence did at first. But once, as she was conversing with Maltravers, when a gay guardsman came to claim her promised hand in the waltz, she seemed struck by a grave change in Ernest's face.

"Do you never waltz?" she asked, while the guardsman was searching for a corner wherein safely to deposit his hat.

"No," said he; "yet there is no impropriety in *my* waltzing."

"And you mean that there is in mine?"

"Pardon me—I did not say so."

"But you think it."

"Nay, on consideration, I am glad, perhaps, that you do waltz."

"You are mysterious."

"Well then, I mean, that you are precisely the woman I would never fall in love with. And I feel the danger is lessened, when I see you destroy any one of my illusions, or I ought to say, attack any one of my prejudices."

Lady Florence colored; but the guardsman and the music left her no time for reply. However, after that night she waltzed no more. She was unwell—she declared she was ordered not to dance, and so quadrilles were relinquished as well as the waltz.

Maltravers could not but be touched and flattered by this regard for his opinion; but Florence contrived to testify it so as to forbid acknowledgment, since another motive had been found for it. The second evening after that commemorated by Ernest's candid rudeness, they chanced to meet in the conservatory, which was connected with the ball-room; and Ernest, pausing to inquire after her health, was struck by the listless and dejected sadness which spoke in her tone and countenance as she replied to him.

"Dear Lady Florence," said he, "I fear you are worse than you will confess. You should shun these draughts. You owe it to your friends to be more careful of yourself."

"Friends!" said Lady Florence, bitterly—"I have no friends!—even my poor father would not absent himself from a cabinet dinner a week after I was dead. But that is the condition of public life—its hot and searing blaze puts out the lights of all lesser but not unholier affections.—Friends! Fate, that made Florence Lascelles the envied heiress, denied her brothers, sisters; and the hour of her birth lost her even the love of a mother! Friends! where shall I find them?"

As she ceased, she turned to the open casement, and stepped out into the verandah, and by the trembling of her voice Ernest felt that she had done so to hide or to suppress her tears.

"Yet," said he, following her, "there is one class of more distant friends, whose interest Lady Florence Lascelles cannot fail to secure, however she may disdain it. Among the humblest of that class, suffer me to rank myself. Come, I assume the the privilege of advice—the night air is a luxury you must not indulge."

"No, no, it refreshes me—it soothes. You misunderstand me, I have no illness that still skies and sleeping flowers can increase."

Maltravers, as is evident, was not in love with Florence, but he could not fail, brought, as he had lately been, under the direct influence of her rare and prodigal gifts, mental and personal, to feel for her a strong and even affectionate interest—the very frankness with which he was accustomed to speak to her, and the many links of cummunion there necessarily were between himself and a mind so naturally powerful and so richly cultivated, had already established their acquaintance upon an intimate footing.

"I cannot restrain you, Lady Florence," said he, half smiling, "but my conscience will not let me be an accomplice. I will turn king's evidence, and hunt out Lord Saxingham to send him to you."

Lady Florenee, whose face was averted from his, did not appear to hear him.

"And you, Mr. Maltravers," turning quickly round—"you—have you friends?—Do you feel that there are, I do not say public, but private affections and duties, for which life is made less a possession than a trust?"

"Lady Florence—no!—I have friends, it is true, and Cleveland is of the nearest; but the life within life—the second self, in whom we vest the right and mastery over our own being—I know it not. But is it," he added, after a pause, "a rare privation? Perhaps it is a happy one. I have learned to lean on my own soul, and not look elsewhere for the reeds that a wind can break."

"Ah, it is a cold philosophy—you may reconcile yourself to its wisdom in the world, in the hum and shock on men: but in solitude, with Nature—ah, no! While the mind alone is occupied, you may be contented with the pride of stoicism; but there are moments when the *heart* wakens as from a sleep—wakens like a frightened child—to feel itself alone and in the dark."

Ernest was silent, and Florence continued, in an altered voice; "This is a strange conversation—and you must think me indeed a wild, romance-reading person, as the world is apt to call me. But if I live—I—pshaw!—life denies ambition to women."

"If a woman like you, Lady Florence, should ever love, it will be one in whose career you may perhaps find that noblest of all ambitions—the ambition women only feel—the ambition for another!"

'Ah! but I shall never love," said Lady Florence, and her cheek grew pale as the starlight shone on it, "still, perhaps," she added quickly, "I may at least know the blessing of friendship. Why now," and here, approaching Maltravers, she laid her hand with a wining frankness on his arm—"why now, should not we be to each other as if love, as you call it, were not a thing for earth—and friendship supplied its place!—there is no danger of our falling in love with each other. You are not vain enough to expect it in me, and I you know, am a coquette; let us be friends, confidants—at least till you marry, or I give another the right to control my friendships and monopolize my secrets."

Maltravers was startled — the sentiment Florence addressed to him, he, in words not dissimilar, had once addressed to Valerie.

"The world," said he, kissing the hand that yet lay on his arm, "the world will——"

"Oh, you men!—the world, the world!—Everything, gentle, everything pure, everything noble, high wrought and holy—is to be squared, and cribbed, and mained to the rule and measure of the world! The world—are you too its slave? Do you not despise its hollow cant—its methodical hypocrisy?"

"Heartily," said Ernest Maltravers, almost with fierceness—"no man ever so scorned its false gods, and its miserable creeds—its war upon the weak—its fawning upon the great—its ingratitude to benefactors—its sordid league with mediocrity against excellence. Yes, in proportion as I love mankind, I despise and detest that worse than Venetian obligarchy which mankind set over them and call 'THE WORLD.'"

And then it was, warmed by the excitement of released feelings, long and carefully shrouded, that this man, ordinarily so calm and self-possessed, poured burningly and passionately forth all those tumultuous and almost tremendous thoughts, which, however much we regulate, control, or disguise them, lurk deep within the souls of all of us, the seeds of the eternal war between the natural mar and the artificial, between our wilder genius and our social conventionalities;—thoughts that from time to time break forth into the harbingers of vain and fruitless revolutions, impotent struggles against destiny;—thoughts that good and wise men would be slow to promulge and propogate, for they are of a fire which burns as well as brightens, and which spreads from heart to heart as a spark spreads amidst flax;—thoughts which are rifest where natures are most high, but belong to truths that Virtue dare not tell aloud. And as Maltravers spoke, with eyes flashing almost intolerable light—his breast heaving—his form dilated, never to the eyes of Florence Lascelles did he seem so great: the chains that bound the strong limbs of his spirit seemed snapped asunder, and all his soul was visible and towering, as a thing that has escaped slavery, and lifts its crest to heaven, and feels that it is free.

That evening saw a new bond of alliance between these two persons;—young, handsome, and of opposite sexes, they agreed to be friends, and nothing more! Fools!

CHAPTER II.

"Idem velle, et idem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia est. * "—SALLUST.

"*Carlos.* That letter.
Princess Eboli. Oh, I shall die. Return it instantly."
—SCHILLER: *Don Carlos.*

IT seemed as if the compact Maltravers and Lady Florence had entered into removed what-

* To will the same thing and not to will the same thing, that at length is firm friendship.

ever embarrassment and reserve had previously existed. They now conversed with an ease and freedom, not common in persons of different sexes before they have passed their grand climacteric. Ernest, in ordinary life, like most men of warm emotions and strong imagination, if not taciturn, was at least guarded. It was as if a weight were taken from his breast, when he found one person who could understand him best when he was most candid. His eloquence —his poetry—his intense and concentrated enthusiasm found a voice. He could talk to an individual as he would have written to the public—a rare happiness to the men of books.

Florence seemed to recover her health and spirits as by a miracle; yet was she more gentle, more subdued, than of old—there was less effort to shine, less indifference whether she shocked. Persons who had not met her before, wondered why she was dreaded in society. But at times a great natural irritability of temper—a quick suspicion of the motives of those around her—an imperious and obstinate vehemence of will, were visible to Maltravers, and served, perhaps, to keep him heartwhole. He regarded her through the eyes of the intellect, not those of the passions—he thought of her not as a woman—her very talents, her very grandeur of idea and power of purpose, while they delighted him in conversation, diverted his imagination from dwelling on her beauty. He looked on her as something apart from her sex—a glorious creature spoilt by being a woman. He once told her so, laughingly, and Florence considered it a compliment. Poor Florence, her scorn of her sex avenged her sex, and robbed her of her proper destiny!

Cleveland silently observed their intimacy, and listened with a quiet smile to the gossips who pointed out *tête-à-têtes* by the terrace, and loiterings by the lawn, and predicted what would come of it all. Lord Saxingham was blind. But his daughter was of age, in possession of her princely fortune, and had long made him sensible of her independence of temper. His lordship, however, thoroughly misunderstood the character of her pride, and felt fully convinced she would marry no one less than a duke; as for flirtations, he thought them natural and innocent amusements. Besides, he was very little at Temple Grove. He went to London every morning after breakfasting in his own room—came back to dine, play at whist, and talk good-humored nonsense to Florence in his dressing-room, for the three minutes that took place between his sipping his wine-and-water and the appearance of his valet. As for the other guests, it was not their business to do more than gossip with each other; and so Florence and Maltravers went on their way unmolested though not unobserved. Maltravers not being himself in love, never fancied that Lady Florence loved him, or that she would be in any danger of doing so:—this is a mistake a man often commits—a woman never. A woman always knows when she is loved, though she often imagines she is loved when she is not. Florence was not happy, for happiness is a calm feeling. But she was excited with a vague, wild, intoxicating emotion.

She had learned from Maltravers that she had been misinformed by Ferrers, and that no other claimed empire over his heart; and whether or not he loved her, still for the present they seemed all in all to each other; she lived but for the present day, she would not think of the morrow.

Since that severe illness which had tended so much to alter Ernest's mode of life, he had not come before the public as an author. Latterly, however, the old habit had broken out again. With the comparative idleness of recent years, the ideas and feelings which crowd so fast on the poetical temperament, once indulged, had accumulated within him to an excess that demanded vent. For with some, to write is not a vague desire, but an imperious destiny. The fire is kindled and must break forth; the wings are fledged and the birds must leave their nest. The communication of thought to man is implanted as an instinct in those breasts to which heaven has intrusted the solemn agencies of genius. In the work which Maltravers now composed, he consulted Florence: his confidence delighted her—it was a compliment she could appreciate.

Wild, fervid, impassioned, was that work—a brief and holiday creation—the youngest and most beloved of the children of his brain. And as day by day the bright design grew into shape, and thought and imagination found themselves "local habitations," Florence felt as if she were admitted into the palace of the genii, and made acquainted with the mechan-

ism of those spells aud charms with which the preternatural powers of mind design the witchery of the world. Ah, how different in depth and majesty were those inter-communications of idea between Ernest Maltravers and a woman scarcely inferior to himself in capacity and acquirement, from that bridge of shadowy and dim sympathies which the enthusiastic boy had once built up between his own poetry of knowledge and Alice's poetry of love!

It was one late afternoon in September, when the sun was slowly going down its western way, that Lady Florence, who had been all that morning in her own room, paying off, as she said, the dull arrears of correspondence, rather on Lord Saxingham's account than her own; for he punctiliously exacted from her the most scrupulous attention to cousins fifty times removed, provided they were rich, clever, well off, or in any way of coasequence:—it was one afternoon that, relieved from these avocations, Lady Florence strolled through the grounds with Cleveland. The gentlemen were still in the stubble-fields, the ladies were out in barouches and pony phaetons, and Cleveland and Lady Florence were alone.

Apropos of Florence's epistolary employment, their conversation fell upon that most charming species of literature, which joins with the interest of a novel the truth of a history—the French memoir and letter-writers. It was a part of literature in which Cleveland was thoroughly at home.

"Those agreeable and polished gossips," said he, "how well they contrived to introduce Nature into Art! Everything artificial seemed so natural to them. They even feel by a kind of clockwork, which seems to go better than the heart itself. Those pretty sentiments, those delicate gallantries of Madame de Sévigné to her daughter, how amiable they are; but somehow or other I can never fancy them the least motherly. What an ending for a maternal epistle is that elegant compliment—'Songez que de tous les cœurs où vous regnez, il n'y en a ancun où votre empire soit si bien établi que dans le mien.' I can scarcely fancy Lord Saxingham writing so to you, Lady Florence." *

"No, indeed," replied Lady Florence, smiling. "Neither papas nor mammas in England are much addicted to compliment, but I confess I like preserving a sort of gallantry even in our most familiar connections—why should we not carry the imagination into all the affections?"

"I can scarce answer the why," returned Cleveland; "but I think it would destroy the reality. I am rather of the old school. If I had a daughter, and asked her to get my slippers, I am afraid I should think it a little wearisome if I had, in receiving them, to make *des belles phrases* in return."

While they were thus talking, and Lady Florence continued to press her side of the question, they passed through a little grove that conducted to an arm of the stream which ornamented the grounds, and by its quiet and shadowy gloom was meant to give a contrast to the livelier features of the domain. Here they came suddenly upon Maltravers. He was walking by the side of the brook, and evidently absorbed in thought.

It was the trembling of Lady Florence's hand as it lay on Cleveland's arm, that induced him to stop short in an animated commentary on Rochefoucauld's character of Cardinal de Retz, and look round.

"Ha, most meditative Jacques!" said he: "and what new moral hast thou been conning in our Forest of Ardennes?"

"Oh, I am glad to see you—I wished to consult you, Cleveland. But first, Lady Florence, to convince you and our host that my rambles have not been wholly fruitless, and that I could not walk from Dan to Beersheba and find all barren, accept my offerings—a wild rose that I discovered in the thickest part of the wood. It is not a civilized rose. Now, Cleveland, a word with you."

"And now, Mr. Maltravers, I am *de trop*," said Lady Florence.

"Pardon me, I have no secrets from you in this matter—or rather these matters—for there are two to be discussed. In the first place Lady Florence, that poor Cesarini,—you know and like him—nay, no blushes."

"Did I blush?—then it was in recollection of an old reproach of yours."

"At its justice!—well, no matter. He is one for whom I always felt a lively interest. His very morbidity of temperament only increases my anxiety for his future fate. I

* Think that of all the hearts over which you reign, there is not one in which your empire can be so well established as in mine.

have received a letter from De Montaigne, his brother-in-law, who seems seriously uneasy about Castruccio. He wishes him to leave England at once, as the sole means of restoring his broken fortunes. De Montaigne has the opportunity of procuring him a diplomatic situation, which may not again occur—and—but you know the man !—what shall we do ? I am sure he will not listen to me; he looks on me as an interested rival for fame."

"Do you think I have any subtler eloquence?" said Cleveland. "No, I am an author, too. Come, I think your ladyship must be the arch-negotiator."

"He has genius—he has merit," said Maltravers, pleadingly: "he wants nothing but time and experience to wean him from his foibles. *Will* you try to save him, Lady Florence?"

"Why ! nay, I must not be obdurate—I will see him when I go to town. It is like you, Mr. Maltravers, to feel this interest in one——"

"Who does not like me, you would say—but he will some day or other. Besides, I owe him deep gratitude. In his weaker qualities I have seen many which all literary men might incur, without strict watch over themselves; and let me add, also, that his family have great claims on me."

"You believe in the soundness of his heart, and in the integrity of his honor?" said Cleveland, inquiringly.

"Indeed I do; these are—these must be, the redeeming qualities of poets."

Maltravers spoke warmly; and such at that time was his influence over Florence, that his words formed—alas, too fatally !—her estimate of Castruccio's character, which had at first been high, but which his own presumption had latterly shaken. She had seen him three or four times in the interval between the receipt of his apologetic letter and her visit to Cleveland, and he had seemed to her rather sullen than humbled. But she felt for the vanity she herself had wounded.

"And now," continued Maltravers, "for my second subject of consultation. But that is political—will it weary Lady Florence?"

"Oh, no; to politics I am never indifferent: they always inspire me with contempt or admiration; according to the motives of those who bring the science into action. Pray say on."

"Well," said Cleveland, "one confidant at a time; you will forgive me, for I see my guests coming across the lawn, and I may as well make a diversion in your favor. Ernest can consult *me* at any time."

Cleveland walked away, but the intimacy between Maltravers and Florence was of so frank a nature, that there was nothing embarrassing in the thought of a *tête-à-tête.*

"Lady Florence," said Ernest, "there is no one in the world with whom I can confer so cheerfully as with you. I am almost glad of Cleveland's absence, for, with all his amiable and fine qualities, 'the world is too much with him,' and we do not argue from the same data. Pardon my prelude—now to my position. I have received a letter from Mr. ——. That statesman, whom none but those acquainted with the chivalrous beauty of his nature can understand or appreciate, sees before him the most brilliant career that ever opened in this country to a public man not born an aristocrat. He has asked me to form one of the new administration that he is about to create: the place offered to me is above my merits, nor suited to what I have yet done, though, perhaps, it be suited to what I may yet do. I make that qualification, for you know," added, Ernest with a proud smile, "that I am sanguine and self-confidant."

"You accept the proposal?"

"Nay—should I not reject it ? Our politics are the same only for the moment, our ultimate objects are widely different. To serve with Mr.——, I must make an unequal compromise—abandon nine opinions to promote one. Is not this a capitulation of that great citadel, one's own conscience? No man will call me inconsistent, for, in public life, to agree with another on a party question is all that is required; the thousand questious not yet ripened, and lying dark and concealed in the future, are not inquired into and divined: but I own I shall deem myself worse than inconsistent. For this is my dilemma,—if I use this noble spirit merely to advance one object, and then desert him where he halts, I am treacherous to him—if I halt with him, but one of my objects effected, I am treacherous to myself. Such are my views. It is with pain I arrive at them, for, at first, my heart beat with a selfish ambition."

"You are right, you are right," exclaimed

Florence, with glowing cheeks, "how could I doubt you? I comprehend the sacrifice you make; for a proud thing is it to soar above the predictions of foes in that palpable road to honor which the world's hard eyes can see, and the world's cold heart can measure; but prouder is it to feel that you have never advanced one step to the goal, which remembrance would retract. No, my friend, wait your time, confident that it must come, when conscience and ambition can go hand-in-hand —when the broad objects of a luminous and enlarged policy lie before you like a chart, and you can calculate every step of the way without peril of being lost. Ah, let them still call loftiness of purpose and whiteness of soul the dreams of a theorist,—even if they be so, the Ideal in this case is better than the Practical. Meanwhile your position is not one to forfeit lightly. Before you is that throne in literature which it requires no doubtful step to win, if you have, as I believe, the mental power to attain it. An ambition that may indeed be relinquished, if a more troubled career can better achieve those public purposes at which both letters and policy should aim, but which is not to be surrendered for the rewards of a placeman, or the advancement of courtier."

It was while uttering these noble and inspiring sentiments, that Florence Lascelles suddenly acquired in Ernest's eye a loveliness with which they had not before invested her.

"Oh," he said, as with a sudden impulse, he lifted her hand to his lips, "blessed be the hour in which you gave me your friendship! These are the thoughts I have longed to hear from living lips, when I have been tempted to believe patriotism a delusion, and virtue but a name."

Lady Florence heard, and her whole form seemed changed,—she was no longer the majestic sibyl, but the attached, timorous, delighted woman.

It so happened that in her confusion she dropped from her hand the flower Maltravers had given her, and involuntarily glad of a pretext to conceal her countenance, she stooped to take it from the ground. In so doing, a letter fell from her bosom—and Maltravers, as he bent forwards to forestall her own movement, saw that the direction was to himself, and in the handwriting of his unknown correspondent. He seized the letter, and gazed in flattered and entranced astonishment, first on the writing, next on the detected writer. Florence grew deadly pale, and covering her face with her hands burst into tears.

"O fool that I was," cried Ernest, in the passion of the moment, "not to know—not to have felt that there were not two Florences in the world! But if the thought had crossed me, I would not have dared to harbor it."

"Go, go," sobbed Florence; "leave me, in mercy leave me!"

"Not till you bid me rise," said Ernest, in emotion scarcely less deep than hers, as he sank on his knee at her feet.

Need I go on?—When they left that spot, a soft confession had been made—deep vows interchanged, and Ernest Maltravers was the accepted suitor of Florence Lascelles.

CHAPTER III.

"A hundred fathers would in my situation tell you that, as you are of noble extraction, you should marry a nobleman. But I do not say so. I will not sacrifice my child to any prejudice."—KOTZEBUE: *Lover's Vows.*

"Take heed, my lord; the welfare of us all
Hangs on the cutting short that fraudful man."
—SHAKESPEARE: *Henry VI.*

"Oh how this spring of love resembleth
Th' uncertain glory of an April day;
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away!"
—SHAKESPEARE: *Two Gentlemen of Verona,*

WHEN Maltravers was once more in his solitary apartment, he felt as in a dream. He had obeyed an impulse, irresistible, perhaps, but one with which the *conscience of his heart* was not satisfied. A voice whispered to him, "Thou hast deceived her and thyself —thou dost not love her!" In vain he recalled her beauty, her grace, her genius—her singular and enthusiastic passion for himself —the voice still replied, "Thou dost not love. Bid farewell for ever to thy fond dreams of a life more blessed than that of mortals. From the stormy sea of the future are blotted out eternally for thee—Calypso and her Golden Isle. Thou canst no more paint on the dim canvas of thy desires the form of her with whom thou couldst dwell for ever. Thou hast

been unfaithful to thine own ideal—thou hast given thyself for ever and for ever to another —thou hast renounced hope—thou must live as in a prison, with a being with whom thou hast not the harmony of love."

"No matter," said Maltravers, almost alarmed, and starting from these thoughts, "I am betrothed to one who loves me—it is folly and dishonor to repent and to repine. I have gone through the best years of youth without finding the Egeria with whom the cavern would be sweeter than a throne. Why live to the grave a vain and visionary Nympholept? Out of the real world could I have made a nobler choice?"

While Maltravers thus communed with himself, Lady Florence passed into her father's dressing-room, and there awaited his return from London. She knew his worldly views—she knew also the pride of her affianced, and she felt that she alone could mediate between the two.

Lord Saxingham at last returned; busy, bustling, important, and good-humored as usual. "Well, Flory, well?—glad to see you —quite blooming, I declare,—never saw you with such a color—monstrous like me, certainly. We always had fine complexions and fine eyes in our family. But I'm rather late—first bell rung—we *ci-devant jeunes hommes* are rather long dressing, and you are not dressed yet, I see."

"My dearest father, I wished to speak with you on a matter of much importance."

"Do you!—what, immediately?"

"Yes."

"Well—what is it?—your Slingsby property, I suppose."

"No, my dear father—pray sit down and hear me patiently."

Lord Saxingham began to be both alarmed and curious—he seated himself in silence, and looked anxiously in the face of his daughter.

"You have always been very indulgent to me," commenced Florence, with a half smile, "and I have had my own way more than most young ladies. Believe me, my dear father, I am most grateful, not only for your affection, but your esteem. I have been a strange wild girl, but I am now about to reform; and as the first step, I ask your consent to give myself a preceptor and a guide—"

"A what!" cried Lord Saxingham.

"In other words, I am about to—to—well, the truth must out—to marry."

"Has the Duke of * * * * been here to-day?"

"Not that I know of. But it is no duke to whom I have promised my hand—it is a nobler and rarer dignity that has caught my ambition. Mr. Maltravers has——"

"Mr. Maltravers!—Mr. Devil!—the girl's mad!—don't talk to me, child, I won't consent to any such nonsense. A country gentleman—very respectable, very clever, and all that, but it's no use talking—my mind's made up. With your fortune, too."

"My dear father, I will not marry without your consent, though my fortune is settled on me, and I am of age."

"There's a good child—and now let me dress—we shall be late."

"No, not yet," said Lady Florence, throwing her arm carelessly around her father's neck —"I shall marry Mr. Maltravers, but it will be with your approval. Just consider; If I married the Duke of * * * *, he would expect all my fortune, such as it is. Ten thousand a-year is at my disposal, if I marry Mr. Maltravers, it will be settled on you—I always meant it—it is a poor return for your kindness, your indulgence—but it will show that your own Flory is not ungrateful."

"I won't hear."

"Stop—listen to reason. You are not rich —you are entitled but to a small pension if you ever resign office; and your official salary, I have often heard you say, does not prevent you from being embarrassed. To whom should a daughter give from her superfluities, but to a parent?—from whom should a parent receive, but from a child, who can never repay his love?—Ah, this is nothing; but you—you who have never crossed her lightest whim—do not you destroy all the hopes of happiness your Florence can ever form."

Florence wept, and Lord Saxingham, who was greatly moved, let fall a few tears also. Perhaps it is too much to say that the pecuniary part of the proffered arrangement entirely won him over; but still the way it was introduced softened his heart. He possibly thought that it was better to have a good and grateful daughter in a country gentleman's wife, than a sullen and thankless one in a duchess. However that may be certain it is, that before Lord

Saxingham began his toilet, he promised to make no obstacle to the marriage, and all he asked in return was, that at least three months (but that indeed the lawyers would require) should elapse before it took place; and on this understanding Florence left him, radiant and joyous as Flora herself, when the sun of spring makes the world a garden. Never had she thought so little of her beauty, and never had it seemed so glorious, as that happy evening. But Maltravers was pale and thoughtful, and Florence in vain sought his eyes during the dinner, which seemed to her insufferably long. Afterwards, however, they met, and conversed apart the rest of the evening; and the beauty of Florence began to produce upon Ernest's heart its natural effect; and that evening—ah, how Florence treasured the remembrance of every hour, every minute of its annals!

It would have been amusing to witness the short conversation between Lord Saxingham and Maltravers, when the latter sought the Earl at night in his lordship's room. To Lord Saxingham's surprise, not a word did Maltravers utter of his own subordinate pretensions to Lady Florence's hand. Coldly, drily, and almost haughtily, did he make the formal proposals, "as if (as Lord Saxingham afterwards said to Ferrers) the man were doing me the highest possible honor in taking my daughter, the beauty of London, with fifty thousand a-year, off my hands." But this was quite Maltravers!—if he had been proposing to the daughter of a country curate, without a sixpence, he would have been the humblest of the humble. The Earl was embarrassed and discomposed—he was almost awed by the Siddons like countenance, and Coriolanus-like air of his son-in-law—he even hinted nothing of the compromise as to time which he had made with his daughter. He thought it better to leave it to Lady Florence to arrange that matter. They shook hands frigidly, and parted.

Maltravers went next into Cleveland's room, and communicated all to the delighted old man, whose congratulations were so fervid that Maltravers felt it would be a sin not to fancy himself the happiest man in the world. That night he wrote his refusal of the appointment offered him.

The next day Lord Saxingham went to his office in Downing Street as usual, and Lady Florence and Ernest found an opportunity to ramble through the grounds alone.

There it was that occurred those confessions, sweet alike to utter and to hear. Then did Florence speak of her early years—of her self-formed and solitary mind—of her youthful dreams and reveries. Nothing around her to excite interest or admiration, or the more romantic, the higher, or the softer qualities of her nature, she turned to contemplation and to books. It is the combination of the faculties with the affections, exiled from action, and finding no wordly vent, which produces Poetry, the child of passion and of thought. Hence, before the real cares of existence claim them, the young, who are abler yet lonelier than their fellows, are nearly always poets: and Florence was a poetess. In minds like this, the first book that seems to embody and represent their own most cherished and beloved trains of sentiment and ideas, ever creates a reverential and deep enthusiasm. The lonely, and proud, and melancholy soul of Maltravers, which made itself visible in all his creations, became to Florence like a revealer of the secrets of her own nature. She conceived an intense and mysterious interest in the man whose mind exercised so pervading a power over her own. She made herself acquainted with his pursuits, his career—she fancied she found a symmetry and harmony between the actual being and the breathing genius—she imagined she understood what seemed dark and obscure to others. He whom she had never seen, grew to her a never-absent friend. His ambition, his reputation, were to her like a possession of her own. So at length, in the folly of her young romance, she wrote to him, and dreaming of no discovery, anticipating no result, the habit once indulged became to her that luxury which writing for the eye of the world is to an author oppressed with the burthen of his own thoughts. At length she saw him, and he did not destroy her illusion. She might have recovered from the spell if she had found him ready at once to worship at her shrine. The mixture of reserve and frankness—frankness of language, reserve of manner—which belonged to Maltravers, piqued her. Her vanity became the auxiliary to her imagination.

At length they met at Cleveland's house; their intercourse became more unrestrained—

their friendship was established, and she discovered that she had wilfully implicted her happiness in indulging her dreams; yet even then she believed that Maltravers loved her despite his silence upon the subject of love. His manner, his words bespoke his interest in her, and his voice was very soft when he spoke to women; for he had much of the old chivalric respect aud tenderness for the sex. What was general it was natural that she should apply individually—she who had walked the world but to fascinate and to conquer. It was probable that her great wealth and social position imposed a check on the delicate pride of Maltravers—she hoped so—she believed it—yet she felt her danger, and her own pride at last took alarm. In such a moment she had resumed the character of the unknown correspondent—she had written to Maltravers—addressed her letter to his own house, and meant the next day to have gone to London, and posted it there.

In this letter she had spoken of his visit to Cleveland, of his position with herself. She exhorted him, if he loved her, to confess, and if not, to fly. She had written artfully and eloquently; she was desirous of expediting her own fate; and then, with that letter in her bosom, she had met Maltravers, and the reader has learned the rest. Something of all this the blushing and happy Florence now revealed: and when she ended with uttering the woman's soft fear that she had been too bold, is it wonderful that Maltravers, clasping her to his bosom, felt the gratitude, and the delighted vanity, which seemed even to himself like love! And into love those feelings rapidly and deliciously will merge, if fate and accident permit!

And now they were by the side of the water; and the sun was gently setting as on the eve before. It was about the same hour, the fairest of an autumn day; none were near—the slope of the hill hid the house from their view. Had they been in the desert they could not have been more alone. It was not silence that breathed around them, as they sat on that bench with the broad beech spreading over them its trembling canopy of leaves;—but those murmurs of living nature which are sweeter than silence itself—the songs of birds—the tinkling bell of the sheep on the opposite bank—the wind sighing through the trees, and the gentle heaving of the glittering waves that washed the odorous reed and water-lily at their feet. They had both been for some moments silent; and Florence now broke the pause, but in tones more low than usual.

"Ah!" said she, turning towards him, "these hours are happier than we can find in that crowded world whither your destiny must call us. For me, ambition seems for ever at an end. I have found all; I am no longer haunted with the desire of gaining a vague something—a shadowy empire, that we call fame or power. The sole thought that disturbs the calm current of my soul, is the fear to lose a particle of the rich possession I have gained."

"May your fears ever be as idle!"

"And you really love me! I repeat to myself ever and ever that one phrase. I could once have borne to lose you,—now, it would be my death. I despaired of ever being loved for myself; my wealth was a fatal dower; I suspected avarice in every vow, and saw the base world lurk at the bottom of every heart that offered itself at my shrine. But you, Ernest—you, I feel, never could weigh gold in the balance—and you—if you love—love me for myself."

"And I shall love thee more with every hour."

"I know not that: I dread that you will love me less when you know me more. I fear I shall seem to you exacting—I am jealous already. I was jealous even of Lady T——, when I saw you by her side this morning. I would have your every look—monopolize your every word."

This confession did not please Maltravers, as it might have done if he had been more deeply in love. Jealousy, in a woman of so vehement and imperious a nature, was indeed a passion to be dreaded.

"Do not say so, dear Florence," said he, with a very grave smile; "for love should have implicit confidence as its bond and nature—and jealousy is doubt, and doubt is the deatb of love."

A shade passed over Florence's *too* expressive face, and she sighed heavily.

It was at this time that Maltravers, raising his eyes, saw the form of Lumley Ferrers approaching towards them from the opposite end of the terrace: at the same instant, a dark

cloud crept over the sky, the waters seemed overcast, and the breeze fell: a chill and strange presentiment of evil shot across Ernest's heart, and, like many imaginative persons, he was unconsciously superstitious as to presentiments.

"We are no longer alone," said he, rising; "your cousin has doubtless learned our engagement, and comes to congratulate your suitor."

"Tell me," he continued, musingly, as they walked on to meet Ferrers, "are you very partial to Lumley? what think you of his character?—it is one that perplexes me; sometimes I think that it has changed since we parted in Italy—sometimes I think that it has not changed, but ripened."

"Lumley I have known from a child," replied Florence, "and see much to admire and like in him; I admire his boldness and candor; his scorn of the world's littleness and falsehood; I like his good nature—his gaiety—and fancy his heart better than it may seem to the superficial observer."

"Yet he appears to me selfish and unprincipled."

"It is from a fine contempt for the vices and follies of men that he has contracted the habit of consulting his own resolute will—and, believing everything done in this noisy stage of action a cheat, he has accommodated his ambition to the fashion. Though without what is termed genius, he will obtain a distinction and power that few men of genius arrive at."

"Because *genius* is essentially honest," said Maltravers. "However, you teach me to look on him more indulgently. I suspect the real frankness of men whom I know to be hypocrites in public life—but, perhaps, I judge by too harsh a standard."

"Third persons," said Ferrers, as he now joined them, "are seldom unwelcome in the country; and I flatter myself that I am the exact thing wanting to complete the charm of this beautiful landscape."

"You are ever modest, my cousin."

"It is my weak side, I know; but I shall improve with years and wisdom. What say you, Maltravers?" and Ferrers passed his arm affectionately through Ernest's.

"By the by, I am too familiar—I am sunk in the world. I am a thing to be sneered at by you old family people. I am next heir to a bran-new Brummagem peerage. Gad, I feel brassy already!"

"What, is Mr. Templeton——?"

"Mr. Templeton no more; he is defunct, extinguished — out of the ashes rises the phœnix Lord Vargrave. We had thought of a more sounding title; De Courval has a nobler sound,—but my good uncle has nothing of the Norman about him; so we dropped the De as ridiculous—Vargrave is euphonious and appropriate. My uncle has a manor of that name—Baron Vargrave of Vargrave."

"Ah—I congratulate you."

"Thank you. Lady Vargrave may destroy all my hopes yet. But nothing venture, nothing have. My uncle will be gazetted to-day. Poor man, he will be delighted; and as he certainly owes it much to me, he will, I suppose, be very grateful—or hate me ever afterwards—that is a toss up. A benefit conferred is a complete hazard between the thumb of pride and the fore-finger of affection. Heads gratitude, tails hatred! There, that's a simile in the fashion of the old writers; 'Well of English undefiled!' humph!"

"So that beautiful child is Mrs. Templeton's, or rather Lady Vargrave's, daughter by a former marriage?" said Maltravers, abstractedly.

"Yes, it is astonishing how fond he is of her. Pretty little creature—confoundedly artful, though. By the way, Maltravers, we had an unexpectedly stormy night the last of the session — strong division — ministers hard pressed. I made quite a good speech for them. I suppose, however, there will be some change—the moderates will be taken in. Perhaps by next session I may congratulate you."

Ferrers looked hard at Maltravers while he spoke. But Ernest replied coldly, and evasively, and they were now joined by a party of idlers, lounging along the lawn in expectation of the first dinner bell. Cleveland was in high consultation about the proper spot for a new fountain; and he summoned Maltravers to give his opinion whether it should spring from the centre of a flower-bed or beneath the drooping shade of a large willow. While this interesting discussion was going on, Ferrers drew aside his cousin, and pressing her hand affectionately, said, in a soft and tender voice,

"My dear Florence—for in such a time permit me to be familiar—I understand from

Lord Saxingham, whom I met in London, that you are engaged to Maltravers. Busy as I was, I could not rest without coming hither to offer my best and most earnest wish for your happineas. I may seem a careless, I am considered a selfish, person; but my heart is warm to those who really interest it. And never did brother offer up for the welfare of a beloved sister prayers more anxious and fond, than those that poor Lumley Ferrers breathes for Florence Lascelles."

Florence was startled and melted—the whole tone and manner of Lumley were so different from those he usually assumed. She warmly returned the pressure of his hand, and thanked him briefly, but with emotion.

"No one is great and good enough for you, Florence," continued Ferrers—"no one. But I admire your disinterested and generous choice. Maltravers and I have not been friends lately; but I respect him, as all must. He has noble qualities, and he has great ambition. In addition to the deep and ardent love that you cannot fail to to inspire, he will owe you eternal gratitude. In this aristocratic country, your hand secures to him the most brilliant fortunes, the most proud career. His talents will now be measured by a very different standard. His merits will not pass through any subordinate grades, but leap at once into the highest posts: and, as he is even more proud than ambitious, how he must bless one who raises him, without effort, into positions of eminent command?"

"Oh, he does not think of such wordly advantages—he, the too pure, the too refined!" said Florence, with trembling eagerness. "He has no avarice, nothing mercenary in his nature!"

"No: there you indeed do him justice,—there is not a particle of baseness in his mind—I did not say there was. The very greatness of his aspirations, his indignant and scornful pride, lift him above the thought of your wealth, your rank,—except as means to an end."

"You mistake still," said Florence, faintly smiling, but turning pale.

"No," resumed Ferrers, not appearing to hear her, and as if pursuing his own thoughts. "I always predicted that Maltravers would make a distinguished connection in marriage. He would not permit himself to love the low-born or the poor. His affections are in his pride as much as in his heart. He is a great creature—you have judged wisely—and may Heaven bless you!"

With these words, Ferrers left her, and Florence, when she descended to dinner, wore a moody and clouded brow. Ferrers stayed three days at the house. He was peculiarly cordial to Maltravers, and spoke little to Florence. But that litte never failed to leave upon her mind a jealous and anxious irritability, to whlch she yielded with morbid facility. In order to perfectly understand Florence Lascelles, it must be remembered that, with all her dazzling qualities, she was not what is called a loveable person. A certain hardness in her disposition, even as a child, had prevented her winding into the hearts of those around her. Deprived of her mother's care—having little or no intercourse with children of her own age—brought up with a starched governess, or female relations, poor and proud,—she never had contracted the softness of manner which the reciprocation of household affections usually produces. With a haughty consciousness of her powers, her birth, her position, advantages always dinned into her ear, she grew up solitary, unsocial, and imperious. Her father was rather proud than fond of her—her servants did not love her—she had too little consideration for others, too little blandness and suavity to be loved by inferiors—she was too learned and too stern to find pleasure in the conversation and society of young ladies of her own age:—she had no friends. Now, having really strong affections, she felt all this, but rather with resentment than grief—she longed to be loved, but did not *seek* to be so—she felt as it was her fate not to be loved—she blamed fate, not herself.

When, with all the proud, pure, and generous candor of her nature, she avowed to Ernest her love for him, she naturally expected the most ardent and passionate return; nothing less could content her. But the habit and experience of all the past made her eternally suspicious that she was not loved; it was wormwood and poison to her to fancy that Maltravers had ever considered her advantages of fortune, except as a bar to his pretensions and a check on his passion. It was the same thing to her, whether it was the pettiest avarice or the loftiest aspirations that actuated her lover,

if he *had been* actuated in his heart by any sentiment *but* love; and Ferrers, to whose eye her foibles were familiar, knew well how to make his praises of Ernest arouse against Ernest all her exacting jealousies and irritable doubts.

"It is strange," said he, one evening, as he was conversing with Florence, "how complete and triumphant a conquest you have effected over Ernest! Will you believe it?—he conceived a prejudice against you when he first saw you—he even said that you were made to be admired, not to be loved."

"Ha! did he so?—true, true—he has almost said the same thing to me."

"But now how he must love you! Surely he has all the signs."

"And what are the signs, most learned Lumley?" said Florence, forcing a smile.

"Why, in the first place, you will doubtless observe that he never takes his eyes from you—with whomsoever he converses, whatever his occupation, those eyes, restless and pining, wander around for one glance from you."

Florence sighed, and looked up—at the other end of the room, her lover was conversing with Cleveland, and his eyes never wandered in search of her.

Ferrers did not seem to notice this practical contradiction of his theory, but went on.

"Then surely his whole character is changed—that brow has lost its calm majesty, that deep voice its assured and tranquil tone. Has he not become humble, and embarrassed, and fretful, living only on your smile, reproachful if you look upon another—sorrowful if your lip be less smiling—a thing of doubt, and dread, and trembling agitatiou—slave to a shadow—no longer lord of the creation?—Such is love, such is the love you should inspire—such is the love Maltravers is capable of—for I have seen him testify it to another. But," added Lumley, quickly, and as if afraid he had said too much, "Lord Saxingham is looking out for me to make up his whist-table. I go to-morrow—when shall you be in town?"

"In the course of the week," said poor Florence mechanically; and Lumley walked away.

In another moment, Maltravers, who had been more observant than he seemed, joined her where she sat.

"Dear Florence," said he, tenderly, "you look pale—I fear you are not so well this evening."

"No affectation of an interest you do not feel, pray," said Florence, with a scornful lip but swimming eyes.

"Do not feel, Florence!"

"It is the first time, at least, that you have observed whether I am well or ill. But it is no matter."

"My dear Florence,—why this tone?—how have I offended you? Has Lumley said——"

"Nothing but in your praise. Oh, be not afraid, you are one of those of whom all speak highly. But do not let me detain you here! let us join our host—you have left him alone."

Lady Florence waited for no reply, nor did Maltravers attempt to detain her. He looked pained, and when she turned round to catch a glance, that she hoped would be reproachful, he was gone. Lady Florence became nervous and uneasy, talked she knew, not what, and laughed hysterically. She, however, deceived Cleveland into the notion that she was in the best possible spirits.

By and by she rose, and passed through the suite of rooms: her heart was with Maltravers—still he was not visible. At length she entered the conservatory, and there she observed him, through the open casements, walking slowly, and with folded arms, upon the moonlit lawn. There was a short struggle in her breast between woman's pride and woman's love; the last conquered, and she joined him.

"Forgive me, Ernest," she said, extending her hand, "I was to blame."

Ernest kissed the fair hand, and answered touchingly,

"Florence, you have the power to wound me, be forbearing in its exercise. Heaven knows that I would not, from the vain desire of showing command over you, inflict upon you a single pang. Ah! do not fancy that in lovers' quarrels there is any sweetness that compensates the sting."

"I told you I was too exacting, Ernest. I told you, you would not love me so well, when you knew me better."

"And were a false prophetess. Florence, every day, every hour I love you more—better than I once thought I could."

"Then, cried the wayward girl, anxious to pain herself, "then once you did not love me?"

"Florence, I will be candid—I did not. You

are now rapidly obtaining an empire over me, greater than my reason should allow. But, beware: if my love be really a possession you desire,—beware how you arm my reason against you. Florence, I am a proud man. My very consciousness of the more splendid alliances you could form renders me less humble a lover than you might find in others. I were not worthy of you if I were not tenacious of my self-respect."

"Ah," said Florence, to whose heart these words went home, "forgive me but this once. I shall not forgive myself so soon."

And Ernest drew her to his heart, and felt that with all her faults, a woman whom he feared he could not render as happy as her sacrifices to him deserved, was becoming very dear to him. In his heart he knew that she was not formed to render *him* happy; but that was not his thought, his fear. Her love had rooted out all thought of self from that generous breast. His only anxiety was to requite *her*.

They walked along the sward, silent, thoughtful and Florence melancholy, yet blessed.

"That serene heaven, those lovely stars," said Maltravers at last, "do they not preach to us the Philosophy of Peace? Do they not tell us how much of calm belongs to the dignity of man, and the sublime essence of the soul? Petty distractions and self-wrought cares are not congenial to our real nature; their very disturbance is a proof that they are at war with our natures. Ah, sweet Florence, let us learn from yon skies, over which, in the faith of the Poets of old, brooded the wings of primæval and serenest Love, what earthly love should be,—a thing pure as light, and peaceful as immortality, watching over the stormy world, that it shall survive, and high above the clouds and vapors that roll below. Let little minds introduce into the holiest of affections all the bitterness and tumult of common life! Let *us* love as beings who will one day be inhabitants of the stars!"

CHAPTER IV.

"A slippery and subtle knave: a finder out of occasions; that has an eye can stamp and counterfeit advantages."—*Othello.*

"Knavery's plain face is never seen till used."—*Ibid.*

"You see, my dear Lumley," said Lord Saxingham, as the next day the two kinsmen were on their way to London in the Earl's chariot, "you see, that, at the best, this marriage of Flory's is a cursed bore."

"Why, indeed, it has its disadvantages. Maltravers is a gentleman and a man of genius; but gentlemen are plentiful, and his genius only tells against us, since he is not even of our politics."

"Exactly, my own son-in-law voting against me!"

"A practical, reasonable man would change: not so Maltravers,—and all the estates, and all the parliamentary influence, and all the wealth that ought to go with the family and with the party, go out of famlly and against the party. You are quite right, my dear lord—it is a cursed bore."

"And she might have had the Duke of * * * *, a man with a rental of 100,000*l.* a-year. It is too ridiculous.—This Maltravers,—d—d disagreeable fellow, too, eh?"

"Stiff and stately—much changed for the worse of late years—grown conceited and set up."

"Do you know, Lumley, I would rather, of the two, have had you for my son-in-law."

Lumley half started. "Are you serious, my lord? I have not Ernest's fortune—I cannot make such settlements: my lineage too, at least on my mother's side, is less ancient."

"Oh, as to settlements, Flory's fortune ought to be settled on herself,—and as compared with that fortune, what could Mr. Maltravers pretend to settle?—Neither she nor any children she may have could want his 4000*l.* a-year if he settled it all. As for family, connections tell more now-a-days than Norman decent,—and for the rest, you are likely to be old Templeton's heir, to have a peerage—(a large sum of ready money is always useful)—are rising in the house—one of our own set—will soon be in office—and, flattery apart, a devilish good fellow into the bargain. Oh, I would sooner a thousand times that Flory had taken a fancy to you!"

Lumley Ferrers bowed his head but said nothing. He fell into a revery, and Lord Saxingham took up his official red box, became deep in its contents, and forgot all about the marriage of his daughter.

Lumley pulled the cheek-string as the carriage entered Pall Mall, and desired to be set

down at the "Travellers." While Lord Saxingham was borne on to settle the affairs of the nation, not being able to settle those of his own household, Ferrers was inquiring the address of Castruccio Cesarini. The porter was unable to give it to him. The Signor generally called every day for his notes, but no one at the club knew where he lodged. Ferrers wrote, and left with the porter, a line requesting Cesarini to call on him as soon as possible, and bent his way to his house in Great George Street. He went straight into his library, unlocked his escritoire, and took out that letter which, the reader will remember, Maltravers had written to Cesarini, and which Lumley had secured; carefully did he twice read over this effusion, and the second time his face brightened and his eyes sparkled. It is now time to lay this letter before the reader; it ran thus:

"*Private and confidential.*"

"MY DEAR CESARINI,

"The assurance of your friendly feelings is most welcome to me. In much of what you say of marriage, I am inclined, though with reluctance, to agree. As to Lady Florence herself, few persons are more calculated to dazzle, perhaps to fascinate. But is she a person to make a home happy—to sympathize where she has been accustomed to command—to comprehend, and to yield to the waywardness and irritability common to our fanciful and morbid race—to content herself with the homage of a single heart? I do not know her enough to decide the question; but I know her enough to feel deep solicitude and anxiety for your happiness, if centered in a nature so imperious and so vain. But you will remind me of her fortune, her station. You will say that such are the sources from which, to an ambitious mind, happiness may well be drawn. Alas! I fear that the man who marries Lady Florence must indeed confine his dreams of felicity to those harsh and disappointing realities. But, Cesarini, these are not the words which, were we more intimate, I would address to you. I doubt the reality of those affections which you ascribe to her, and suppose devoted to yourself. She is evidently fond of conquest. She sports with the victims she makes. Her vanity dupes others,—perhaps to be duped itself at last. I will not say more to you, "Yours,

"E. MALTRAVERS."

"Hurrah!" cried Ferrers, as he threw down the letter, and rubbed his hands with delight, "I little thought, when I schemed for this letter, that chance would make it inestimably serviceable. There is less to alter than I thought for—the clumsiest botcher in the world could manage it. Let me look again.—Hem, hem—the first phrase to alter is this:—'I know her enough to feel deep solicitude and anxiety for *your* happiness, it centered in a nature so imperious and vain'—scratch out 'your,' and put 'my.' All the rest good, good—till we come to 'affections which you ascribe to her, and suppose devoted to *yourself*'—for '*your*self' write '*my*self'—the rest will do. Now, then, the date—we must change it to the present month, and the work is done. I wish that Italian blockhead would come. If I can but once make an irreparable breach between her and Maltravers, I think that I cannot fail securing his place; her pique, her resentment will hurry her into taking the first who offers, by way of revenge. And, by Jupiter, even if I fail, (which I am sure I shall not), it will be something to keep Flory as lady paramount for a duke of our own party. I shall gain immensely by such a connection; but I lose everything, and gain nothing by her marrying Maltravers—of opposite politics too—whom I begin to hate like poison, But no duke shall have her—Florence Ferrers, the only alliteration I ever liked—yet it would sound rough in poetry.

Lumley then deliberately drew towards him his inkstand—"No pen-knife!—Ah, true, I never mend pens—sad waste—must send out for one." He rang the bell, ordered a penknife to be purchased, and the servant was still out when a knock at the door was heard, and in a minute more Cesarini entered.

"Ah," said Lumley, assuming a melancholy air, "I am glad that you are arrived; you will excuse my having written to you so unceremoniously. You received my note—sit down, pray—and how are you?—you look delicate—can I offer you anything?"

"Wine," said Cesarini, laconically, "wine; your climate requires wine."

Here the servant entered with the penknife, and was ordered to bring wine and sandwiches. Lumley then conversed lightly on different matters till the wine appeared; he was rather surprised to observe Cesarini pour out and drink off glass upon glass, with an evident craving for the excitement. When he had satisfied himself, he turned his dark eyes to Ferrers, and said, "You have news to communicate, I see it in your brow. I am now ready to hear all."

"Well, then, listen to me; you were right in your suspicions; jealousy is ever a true diviner. I make no doubt Othello was quite right,

and Desdemona was no better than she should be. Maltravers has proposed to my cousin, and been accepted."

Cesarini's complexion grew perfectly ghastly; his whole frame shook like a leaf—for a moment he seemed paralyzed.

"Curse him!" said he, at last, drawing a deep breath, and betwixt his grinded teeth—"curse him, from the depths of the heart he has broken?"

"And after such a letter to you!—do you remember it?—here it is. He warns you against Lady Florence, and then secures her to himself—is this treachery?"

"Treachery, black as hell! I am an Italian," cried Cesarini, springing to his feet, and with all the passions of his climate in his face, "and I will be avenged! Bankrupt in fortune, ruined in hopes, blasted in heart—I have still the godlike consolation of the desperate—I have revenge."

"Will you call him out?" asked Lumley, musingly and calmly. "Are you a dead shot? If so, it is worth thinking about; if not, it is a mockery—your shot misses, his goes in the air, seconds interpose, and you both walk away devilish glad to get off so well. Duels are humbug."

"Mr. Ferrers," said Cesarini, fiercely, "this is not a matter of jest."

"I do not make it a jest; and what is more, Cesarini," said Ferrers, with a concentrated energy far more commanding than the Italian's fury, "what is more, I so detest Maltravers, I am so stung by his cold superiority, so wroth with his success, so loathe the thought of his alliance, that I would cut off this hand to frustrate that marriage! I do not jest, man; but I have method and sense in my hatred—it is our English way."

Cesarini stared at the speaker gloomily, clenched his hand, muttered and strode rapidly to and fro the room.

"You would be avenged, so would I. Now what shall be the means?" said Ferrers.

"I will stab him to the heart—I will—"

"Cease these tragic flights. Nay frown and stamp not; but sit down and be reasonable, or leave me and act for yourself."

"Sir," said Cesarini, with an eye that might have alarmed a man less resolute than Ferrers, "have a care how you presume on my distress."

"You are in distress, and you refuse relief; you are bankrupt in fortune, and you rave like a poet, when you should be devising and plotting for the attainment of boundless wealth. Revenge and ambition may both be yours; but they are prizes never won but by a cautious foot as well as a bold hand."

"What would you have me do? and what but his life would content me!"

"Take his life if you can—I have no objection—go and take it; only just observe this, that if you miss your aim, or he, being the stronger man, strike you down, you will be locked up in a madhouse for the next year or two, at least; and that is not the place in which I should like to pass the winter—but as you will."

"You!—you!—But what are you to me? I will go. Good day, sir."

"Stay a moment," said Ferrers, when he saw Cesarini about to leave the room; "stay, take this chair, and listen to me—you had better——"

Cesarini hesitated, and then, as it were, mechanically obeyed.

"Read that letter which Maltravers wrote to you. You have finished—well—now observe—if Florence sees that letter, she will not, and cannot marry the man who wrote it—you must show it to her."

"Ah, my guardian angel, I see it all! Yes, there are words in this letter no woman so proud could ever pardon. Give it me again, I will go at once."

"Pshaw! You are too quick; you have not remarked that this letter was written five months ago, before Maltravers knew much of Lady Florence. He himself has confessed to her that he did not then love her—so much the more would she value the conquest she has now achieved. Florence would smile at this letter and say, 'Ah, he judges me differently now.'"

"Are you seeking to madden me? What do you mean? Did you not just now say that, did she see that letter, she would never marry the writer?"

"Yes, yes, but the letter must be altered. We must erase the date, we must date it from to-day;—to-day—Maltravers returns to-day. We must suppose it written, not in answer to a letter from you, demanding his advice and opinion as to *your* marriage with Lady Flor-

ence, but in answer to a letter of yours in which you congratulate *him* on his approaching marriage to her. By the substitution of one pronoun for another, in two places, the letter will read as well one way as another. Read it again, and see; or stop, I will be the lecturer."

Here Ferrers read over the letter, which by the trifling substitutions he proposed, might indeed bear the character he wished to give it."

"Does the light break in upon you now?" said Ferrers. "Are you prepared to go through a part that requires subtlety, delicacy, address, and, above all, self-control?—qualities that are the common attributes of your countrymen."

"I will do all, fear me not. It may be villanous, it may be base; but I care not; Maltravers shall not rival, master, eclipse me in all things."

"Where are you lodging?"

"Where?—out of a town a little way."

"Take up your home with me for a few days. I cannot trust you out of my sight. Send for your luggage; I have a room at your service."

Cesarini at first refused; but a man who resolves on a crime, feels the awe of solitude, and the necessity of a companion. He went himself to bring his effects, and promised to return to dinner.

"I must own," said Lumley, resettling himself at his desk, "this is the dirtiest trick that ever I played; but the glorious end sanctifies the paltry means. After all, it is the mere prejudice of gentlemanlike education."

A very few seconds, and with the aid of the knife to erase, and the pen to re-write, Ferrers completed his task, with the exception of the change of date, which, on second thoughts, he reserved as a matter to be regulated by circumstances.

"I think I have hit off his *m's* and *y's* tolerably," said he, "considering I was not brought up to this sort of thing. But the alteration would be visible on close inspection. Cesarini must read the letter to her, then if she glances over it herself it will be with bewildered eyes and a dizzy brain. Above all, he must not leave it with her, and must bind her to the closest secrecy. She is honorable, and will keep her word; and so now that matter is settled. I have just time before dinner to canter down to my uncle's and wish the old fellow joy."

CHAPTER V.

"And then my Lord has much that he would state
All good to you."—CRABBE: *Tales of the Heart.*

LORD VARGRAVE was sitting alone in his library, with his account-books before him. Carefully did he cast up the various sums, which, invested in various speculations, swelled his income. The result seemed satisfactory—and the rich man threw down his pen with an air of triumph. "I will invest 120,000*l.* in land—only 120,000*l.* I will not be tempted to sink more. I will have a fine house—a house fitting for a nobleman—a fine old Elizabethan house—a house of historical interest. I must have woods and lakes—and a deer-park, above all. Deer are very gentlemanlike things—very. DeClifford's place is to be sold I know; they ask too much for it, but ready money is tempting. I can bargain—bargain, I am a good hand at a bargain. Should I be now Lord Baron Vargrave, if I had always given people what they asked? I will double my subscriptions to the Bible society, and the Philanthropic, and the building of new churches. The world shall not say Richard Templeton does not deserve his greatness. I will —— Come in. Who 's there—come in."

The door gently opened—the meek face of the new peeress appeared. "I disturb you—I beg your pardon—I——"

"Come in, my dear, come in—I want to talk to you—I want to talk to your ladyship—sit down, pray."

Lady Vargrave obeyed.

"You see," said the peer, crossing his legs and caressing his left foot with both hands, while he see-sawed his stately person to and fro in his choir—"you see that the honor conferred upon me will make a great change in our mode of life, Mrs. Temple——, I mean Lady Vargrave. This villa is all very well—my country-house is not amiss for a country-gentleman—but now, we must support our rank. The landed estate I already possess will go with the title—go to Lumley—I shall buy another at my own disposal, one that I

can feel *thoroughly mine*—it shall be a splendid place, Lady Vargave."

"This place is splendid to me," said Lady Vargrave, timidly.

"This place! nonsense—you must learn loftier ideas, Lady Vargrave; you are young, you can easily contract new habits, more easily perhaps than myself—you are naturally ladylike, though I say it—you have good taste, you don't talk much, you don't show your ignorance—quite right. You must be presented at court, Lady Vargrave—we must give great dinners, Lady Vargrave. Balls are sinful, so is the opera, at least I fear so—yet an opera-box would be a proper appendage to your rank, Lady Vargrave."

"My dear Mr. Templeton——"

"Lord Vargrave, if your ladyship pleases."

"I beg pardon. May you live long to enjoy your honors; but I, my dear Lord—I am not fit to share them: it is only in our quiet life that I can forget what—what I was. You terrify me, when you talk of court—of——"

"Stuff, Lady Vargrave! stuff; we accustom ourselves to these things. Do I look like a man who has stood behind a counter?—rank is a glove that stretches to the hand that wears it. And the child, dear child,—dear Evelyn, she shall be the admiration of London, the beauty, the heiress, the—oh, she will do me honor!"

"She will, she will!" said Lady Vargrave, and the tears gushed from her eyes.

Lord Vargrave was softened.

"No mother ever deserved more from a child than you from Evelyn."

"I would hope I have done my duty," said Lady Vargrave, drying her tears.

"Papa, papa!" cried an impatient voice, tapping at the window, "come and play, papa—come and play at ball, papa!"

And there by the window stood that beautiful child, glowing with health and mirth—her light hair tossed from her forehead, her sweet mouth dimpled with smiles.

"My darling, go on the lawn,—don't overexert yourself—you have not quite recovered that horrid sprain—I will join you immediately—bless you!"

"Don't be long, papa—nobody plays so nicely as you do;" and, nodding and laughing from very glee, away scampered the young fairy.

Lord Vargrave turned to his wife.

"What think you of my nephew—of Lumley?" said he, abruptly.

"He seems all that is amiable, frank, and kind."

Lord Vargrave's brow became thoughtful. "I think so too," he said, after a short pause; "and I hope you will approve of what I mean to do. You see, Lumley was brought up to regard himself as my heir—I owe something to him, beyond the poor estate which goes with, but never can adequately support, *my* title. Family honors, hereditary rank, must be properly regarded. But that dear girl—I shall leave her the bulk of my fortune. Could we not unite the fortune and the title? It would secure the rank to her, it would incorporate all my desires—all my duties."

"But," said Lady Vargrave, with evident surprise, "if I understand you rightly the disparity of years——"

"And what then, what then, Lady Vargrave? Is there no disparity of years between *us*—a greater disparity than between Lumley and that tall girl? Lumley is a mere youth, a youth still, five-and-thirty—he will be little more than forty when they marry; I was between fifty and sixty when I married you, Lady Vargrave. I don't like boy and girl marriages: a man should be older than his wife. But you are so romantic, Lady Vargrave. Besides, Lumley is so gay and good-looking, and wears so well. He has been very nearly forming another attachment; but that, I trust, is out of his head now. They must like each other. You will not gainsay me, Lady Vargrave, and if anything happens to me—life is uncertain."

"Oh, do not speak so—my friend, my benefactor!"

"Why, indeed," resumed his lordship, mildly, "thank Heaven, I am very well—feel younger than ever I did—but still, life is uncertain—and if you survive me, you will not throw obstacles in the way of my grand scheme."

"I—no, no—of course you have the right in all things over her destiny; but so young—so soft-hearted, if she should love one of her own years——"

"Love!—pooh! love does not come into girls' heads unless it is put there.—We will bring her up to love Lumley. I have another reason—a cogent one—our secret!—to him. it

can be confided—it should not go out of our family. Even in my grave I could not rest if a slur were cast on my respectability—my name."

Lord Vargrave spoke solemnly and warmly; then muttering to himself, "Yes, it is for the best," he took up his hat and quitted the room. He joined his stepchild on the lawn. He romped with her—he played with her—that stiff, stately man!—he laughed louder than she did, and ran almost as fast. And when she was fatigued and breathless, he made her sit down beside him, in a little summerhouse, and, fondly stroking down her disordered tresses, said, "You tire me out, child; I am growing too old to play with you. Lumley must supply my place. You love Lumley?"

"Oh, dearly, he is so good-humored, so kind; he has given me such a beautiful doll, with *such* eyes!"

"You shall be his little wife—you would like to be his little wife?"

"Wife! why, poor mamma is a wife, and she is not so happy as I am."

"Your mamma has bad health, my dear," said Vargrave, a little discomposed. "But it is a fine thing to be a wife and have a carriage of your own, and a fine house, and jewels, and plenty of money, and be your own mistress; and Lumley will love you dearly."

"Oh yes, I should like all that."

"And you will have a protector, child, when I am no more!"

The tone, rather than the words, of her stepfather struck a damp into that childish heart. Evelyn lifted her eyes, gazed at him earnestly, and then, throwing her arms around him, burst into tears.

Lord Vargrave wiped his own eyes and covered her with kisses.

"Yes, you shall be Lumley's wife, his honored wife, heiress to my rank as to my fortunes."

"I will do all that papa wishes."

"You will be Lady Vargrave then, and Lumley will be your husband," said the stepfather, impressively. "Think over what I have said. Now let us join mamma. But, as I live, here is Lumley himself. However, it is not yet the time to sound him:—I hope that he has no chance with that Lady Florence."

CHAPTER VI.

* * * "Fair encounter
Of two most rare affections."—*Tempest.*

MEANWHILE the Betrothed were on their road to London. The balmy and serene beauty of the day had induced them to perform the short journey on horseback. It is somewhere said, that lovers are never so handsome as in each other's company, and neither Florence nor Ernest ever looked so well as on horseback. There was something in the stateliness and the grace of both, something even in the aquiline outline of their features, and the haughty bend of the neck, that made a sort of likeness between these young persons, although there was no comparison as to their relative degrees of personal advantage: the beauty of Florence defied all comparison. And as they rode from Cleveland's porch, where the other guests yet lingering were assembled to give the farewell-greeting, there was a general conviction of the happiness destined to the affianced ones,—a general impression that both in mind and person they were eminently suited to each other. Their position was that which is ever interesting, even in more ordinary people, and at that moment they were absolutely popular with all who gazed on them; and when the good old Cleveland turned away with tears in his eyes, and murmured "Bless them!" there was not one of the party who would have hesitated to join in the prayer.

Florence felt a nameless dejection as she quitted a spot so consecrated by grateful recollections.

"When shall we be again so happy?" said she, softly, as she turned back to gaze upon the landscape, which, gay with flowers and shrubs, and the bright English verdure, smiled behind them like a garden.

"We will try and make my old hall, and its gloomy shades, remind us of these fairer scenes, my Florence."

"Ah! describe to me the character of your place. We shall live there principally, shall we not? I am sure I shall like it much better than Marsden Court, which is the name of that huge pile of arches and columns in Vanbrugh's heaviest taste, which will soon be yours."

"I fear we shall never dispose of all your mighty retinue, grooms of the chamber, and Patagonian footmen, and Heaven knows who besides, in the holes and corners of Burleigh," said Ernest, smiling. And then he went on to describe the old place with something of a well-born country gentleman's not displeasing pride; and Florence listened, and they planned, and altered, and added, and improved, and laid out a map for the future. From that topic they turned to another, equally interesting to Florence. The work in which Maltravers had been engaged was completed, was in the hands of the printer, and Florence amused herself with conjectures as to the criticisms it would provoke. She was certain that all that had most pleased her would be *caviare* to the multitude. She never would believe that any one could understand Maltravers but herself. Thus time flew on till they passed that part of the road in which had occurred Ernest's adventure with Mrs. Templeton's daughter. Maltravers paused abruptly in the midst of his glowing periods, as the spot awakened its associations and reminiscences, and looked round anxiously and inquiringly. But the fair apparition was not again visible; and whatever impression the place produced, it gradually died away as they entered the suburbs of the great metropolis. Two other gentleman and a young lady of thirty-three (I had almost forgotten them) were of the party, but they had the tact to linger a little behind during the greater part of the road, and the young lady, who was a wit and a flirt, found gossip and sentiment for both the cavaliers.

"Will you come to us this evening?" asked Florence, timidly.

"I fear I shall not be able. I have several matters to arrange before I leave town for Burleigh, which I must do next week. Three months, dearest Florence, will scarcely suffice to make Burleigh put on its best looks to greet its new mistress; and I have already appointed the great modern magicians of draperies and or-molu to consult how we may make Aladdin's palace fit for the reception of the new princess. Lawyers, too!—in short, I expect to be fully occupied. But to-morrow, at three I shall be with you, and we can ride out, if the day be fine."

"Surely," said Florence, "yonder is Signor Cesarini—how haggard and altered he appears!"

Maltravers, turning his eyes towards the spot to which Florence pointed, saw Cesarini emerging from a lane, with a porter behind him carrying some books and a trunk. The Italian, who was talking and gesticulating as to himself, did not perceive them.

"Poor Castruccio! he seems leaving his lodging," thought Maltravers. "By this time I fear he will have spent the last sum I conveyed to him—I must remember to find him out and replenish his stores.—Do not forget," said he aloud, "to see Cesarini, and urge him to accept the appointment we spoke of."

"I will not forget it—I will see him to-morrow before we meet. Yet it is a painful task, Ernest."

"I allow it. Alas! Florence, you owe him some reparation. He undoubtedly once conceived himself entitled to form hopes, the vanity of which his ignorance of our English world and his foreign birth prevented him from suspecting."

"Believe me, I did not give him the right to form such expectations."

"But you did not sufficiently discourage them. Ah, Florence, never underrate the pangs of hope crushed, of love contemned."

"Dreadful!" said Florence, almost shuddering. "It is strange, but my conscience never so smote me before. It is since I love, that I feel, for the first time, how guilty a creature is——"

"A coquette!" interrupted Maltravers. "Well, let us think of the past no more; but if we can restore a gifted man, whose youth promised much, to an honorable independence and a healthful mind, let us do so. Me, Cesarini never can forgive; he will think I have robbed him of you. But we men—the woman we have once loved, even after she rejects us, ever has some power over us, and your eloquence, which has so often aroused me, cannot fail to impress a nature yet more excitable."

Maltravers, on quitting Florence at her own door, went home, summoned his favorite servant, gave him Cesarini's address at Chelsea, bade him find out where he was, if he had left his lodgings; and leave at his present home, (or failing its discovery) at the "Travellers," a cover, which he made his servant address, enclosing a bank-note of some amount. It

the reader wonder why Maltravers thus constituted himself the unknown benefactor of the Italian, I must tell him that he does not understand Maltravers. Cesarini was not the only man of letters whose faults he pitied, whose wants he relieved. Though his name seldom shone in the pompous list of public subscriptions—though he disdained to affect the Mæcenas and the patron, he felt the brotherhood of mankind, and a kind of gratitude for those who aspired to raise or to delight their species. An author himself, he could appreciate the vast debt which the world owes to authors, and pays but by calumny in life and barren laurels after death. He whose profession is the Beautiful succeeds only through the sympathies. Charity and Compassion are virtues taught with difficulty to ordinary men; to true Genius they are but the instincts which direct it to the Destiny it is born to fulfil,—viz., the discovery and redemption of new tracts in our common nature. Genius—the Sublime Missionary—goes forth from the serene Intellect of the Author to live in the wants, the griefs, the infirmities of others, in order that it may learn their language; and as its highest achievement is Pathos, so its most absolute requisite is Pity!

CHAPTER VII.

"*Don John.* How canst thou cross this marriage?
Borachio. Not honestly, my lord: but so covertly, that no dishonesty shall appear in me, my lord."
—*Much Ado about Nothing.*

FERRERS and Cesarini were sitting over their wine, and both had sunk into silence, for they had only only one subject in common, when a note was brought to Lumley from Lady Florence.—"This is lucky enough!" said he, as he read it. "Lady Florence wishes to see you, and encloses me a note for you, which she asks me to address and forward to you. There it is."

Cesarini took the note with trembling hands: it was very short, and merely expressed a desire to see him the next day at two o'clock.

"What can it be?" he exclaimed; 'can she want to apologize, to explain?"

"No, no, no! Florence will not do that; but, from certain words she dropped in talking with me, I guess that she has some offer to your worldly advantage to propose to you. Ha! by the way, a thought strikes me."

Lumley eagerly rang the bell. "Is Lady Florence's servant waiting for an answer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well—detain him."

"Now, Cesarini, assurance is made doubly sure. Come into the next room. There, sit down at my desk, and write, as I shall dictate, to Maltravers."

"I!"

"Yes, now *do* put yourself in my hands—write, write. When you have finished, I will explain."

Cesarini obeyed, and the letter was as follows:—

"DEAR MALTRAVERS,

"I have learned your approaching marriage with Lady Florence Lascelles. Permit me to congratulate you. For myself, I have overcome a vain and foolish passion; and can contemplate your happiness without a sigh.

"I have reviewed all my old prejudices against marriage, and believe it to be a state which nothing but the most perfect congeniality of temper, pursuits, and minds; can render bearable.—How rare is such congeniality! in your case it may exist. The affections of that beautiful being are doubtless ardent—and they are yours!

"Write me a line by the bearer to assure me of your belief in my sincerity. "Yours,

"C. CESARINI."

"Copy out this letter, I want its ditto—quick. Now seal and direct the duplicate," continued Ferrers; "that's right—go into the hall, give it yourself to Lady Florence's servant, and beg him to take it to Seamore Place, wait for an answer, and bring it here; by which time you will have a note ready for Lady Florence. Say I will mention this to her ladyship,—and give the man half-a-crown. There—begone."

"I do not understand a word of this," said Cesarini, when he returned; "will you explain?"

"Certainly; the copy of the note you have dispatched to Maltravers I shall show to Lady Florence this evening,—as a proof of your sobered and generous feelings; observe, it is so written, that the old letter of your rival may seem an exact reply to it. To-morrow, a reference to this note of yours will bring out our scheme more easily; and if you follow my instructions, you will not seem to *volunteer* showing our handiwork, as we at first intended; but rather to yield it to her eyes from a generous impulse, from an irresistible desire to save her from an unworthy husband and a wretched fate. Fortune has been dealing our cards for us, and has turned up the ace. Three to one now on the odd trick. Maltravers, too, is at home. I called at his house on returning from my uncle's, and learned that he would not stir out all the evening."

In due time came the answer from Ernest: it was short and hurried; but full of all the manly kindness of his nature; it expressed admiration and delight at the tone of Cesarini's letter; it revoked all former expressions derogatory to Lady Florence; it owned the harshness and error of his first impression; it used every delicate argument that could soothe and reconcile Cesarini; and concluded by sentiments of friendship and desire of service, so cordial, so honest, so free from the affectation of patronage—that even Cesarini himself, half insane as he was with passion, was almost softened. Lumley saw the change in his countenance—snatched the letter from his hand—read it—threw it into the fire—and saying, "We must guard against accidents," clapped the Italian affectionately on the shoulder, and added, "Now you can have no remorse,—for a more jesuitical piece of insulting, hypocritical cant I never read. Where's your note to Lady Florence? Your compliments, you will be with her at two. There—now the rehearsal's over, the scenes arranged, and I'll dress, and open the play for you with a prologue."

CHAPTER VIII.

* * * "Æstaut ingens
Imo in corde pudor, mixtoque insania luctu,
Et furiis agitatus amor, et conscia virtus." *
—VIRGIL.

THE next day, punctual to his appointment, Cesarini repaired to his critical interview with Lady Florence. Her countenance, which, like that of most persons whose temper is not under their command, ever too faithfully expressed what was within, was unusually flushed. Lumley had dropped words and hints which had driven sleep from her pillow, and repose from her mind.

She rose from her seat with nervous agitation as Cesarini entered, and made his grave salutation. After a short and embarrassed pause, she recovered, however, her self-possession, and with all a woman's delicate and dexterous tact, urged upon the Italian the expediency of accepting the offer of honorable independence now extended to him.

"You have abilities," she said, in conclusion —"you have friends—you have youth—take advantage of those gifts of nature and fortune; —and fulfil such a career as," added Lady Florence with a smile, "Dante did not consider incompatible with poetry."

"I cannot object to any career," said Cesarini, with an effort, "that may serve to remove me from a country that has no longer any charms for me. I thank you for your kindness—I will obey you. May you be happy—and yet—no, ah! no—happy you must be! Even *he*, sooner or later, must see you with my eyes."

"I know," replied Florence, falteringly, "that you have wisely and generously mastered a past illusion. Mr. Ferrers allowed me to see the letter your wrote to Er——to Mr. Maltravers; it was worthy of you—it touched me deeply; but I trust you will outlive your prejudices against——"

"Stay," interrupted Cesarini; "did Ferrers communicate to you the answer to that letter?"

"No, indeed."

"I am glad of it."

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* Deep in her inmost heart is stirred the immense shame, and madness with commingled grief, and love agitated by rage, and conscious virtue.

"Why?"

"Oh, no matter. Heaven bless you—farewell."

"No—I implore you do not go yet—what was there in that letter that it could pain me to see? Lumley hinted darkly, but would not speak out—be more frank."

"I cannot—it would be treachery to Maltravers—cruelty to you—yet, would it be cruel?"

"No, it would not—it would be kindness and mercy; show me the letter—you have it with you."

"You could not bear it; you would hate me for the pain it would give you. Let me depart."

"Man, you wrong Maltravers. I see it now. You would darkly slander him whom you cannot openly defame. Go—I was wrong to listen to you—go!"

"Lady Florence, beware how you taunt me into undeceiving you. Here is the letter, it is his handwriting—will you read it? I warn you not.

"I will believe nothing but the evidence of my own eyes—give it me."

"Stay, then; on two conditions. First, that you promise me sacredly that you will not disclose to Maltravers, without my consent, that you have seen this letter. Think not I fear his anger. No! but in the mortal encounter that must ensue, if you thus betray me—your character would be lowered in the world's eyes, and even I (my excuse unknown) might not appear to have acted with honor in obeying your desire, and warning you, while there is yet time, of bartering love for avarice. Promise me."

"I do—I do most solemnly."

"Secondly, assure me that you will not ask to keep the letter, but will immediately restore it to me."

"I promise it. Now then."

"Take the letter."

Florence seized, and rapidly read the fatal and garbled document: her brain was dizzy—her eyes clouded—her ears rang as if with the sound of water—she was sick and giddy with emotion, but she read enough. This letter was written, then, in answer to Castruccio's of last night,—it avowed dislike of her character,—it denied the sincerity of her love,—it more than hinted the mercenary nature of his own feelings. Yes, even there, where she had garnered up her heart, she was not Florence, the lovely and beloved woman; but Florence, the wealthy and high-born heiress. The world which she had built upon the faith and heart of Maltravers, crumbled away at her feet. The letter dropped from her hands—her whole form seemed to shrink and shrivel up; her teeth were set, and her cheek was as white as marble.

"O God!" cried Cesarini, stung with remorse. "Speak to me, speak to me, Florence! I did wrong—forget that hateful letter! I have been false—false!"

"Ah, false—say so again!—no, no, I remember *he* told me—he, so wise, so deep a judge of human character, that he would be sponsor for your faith—that your honor and heart were incorruptible. It is true—I thank you—you have saved me from a terrible fate."

"O Lady Florence, dear—too dear—yet would that—alas! she does not listen to me," muttered Castruccio, as Florence, pressing her hands to her temples, walked wildly to and fro the room; at length, she paused opposite to Cesarini, looked him full in the face, returned him the letter without a word, and pointed to the door.

"No, no, do not bid me leave you yet," said Cesarini, trembling with repentant emotion—yet half beside himself with jealous rage at her love for his rival.

"My friend, go," said Florence, in a tone of voice singularly subdued and soft. "Do not fear me—I have more pride in me than even affection; but there are certain struggles in a woman's breast which she could never betray to any one—any one but a mother. God help me, I have none!—go—when next we meet, I shall be calm."

She held out her hand as she spoke, the Italian dropped on his knee, kissed it convulsively, and, fearful of trusting himself further, vanished from the room.

He had not been long gone before Maltravers was seen riding through the street. As he threw himself from his horse, he looked up at the window, and kissed his hand at Lady Florence, who stood there, watching his arrival, with feelings indeed far different from those he anticipated. He entered the room lightly and gaily.

Florence stirred not to welcome him. He

approached and took her hand; she withdrew it with a shudder.

"Are you not well, Florence?"

"I am well, for I have recovered."

"What do you mean?—why do you turn from me?"

Lady Florence fixed her eyes on him, eyes that literally blazed—her lip quivered with scorn.

"Mr. Maltravers, at length I know you. I understand the feelings with which you have sought a union between us. O God! why, why was I thus cursed with riches—why made a thing of barter and merchandise, and avarice, and low ambition? Take my wealth—take it, Mr. Maltravers, since that is what you prize. Heaven knows I can cast it willingly away; but leave the wretch whom you long deceived, and who now, wretch though she be, renounces and despises you!"

"Lady Florence, do I hear aright? Who has accused me to you?"

"None, sir, none—I would have believed none. Let it suffice, that I am convinced that our union can be happy to neither; question me no further—all intercourse between us is for ever over!"

"Pause," said Maltravers, with cold and grave solemnity—"another word, and the gulf will become impassable. Pause."

"Do not," exclaimed the unhappy lady, stung by what she considered the assurance of a hardened hypocrisy—"do not affect this haughty superiority, it dupes me no longer. I was your slave while I loved you—the tie is broken. I am free, and I hate and scorn you! Mercenary and sordid as you are, your baseness of spirit revives the differences of our rank. Henceforth, Mr. Maltravers, I am Lady Florence Lascelles, and by that title alone will you know me. Begone, sir!"

As she spoke, with passion distorting every feature of her face, all her beauty vanished away from the eyes of the proud Maltravers, as if by witchcraft—the angel seemed transformed into the fury; and cold, bitter, and withering was the eye which he fixed upon that altered countenance.

"Mark me, Lady Florence Lascelles," said he, very calmly, "you have now said what you can never recall. Neither in man nor in woman did Ernest Maltravers ever forget or forgive a sentence which accused him of dishonor. I bid you farewell for ever; and with my last words I condemn you to the darkest of all dooms—the remorse that comes too late!"

Slowly he moved away—and as the door closed upon that towering and haughty form, Florence already felt that his curse was working to its fulfilment. She rushed to the window—she caught one last glimpse of him as his horse bore him rapidly away. Ah! when shall they meet again?

CHAPTER IX.

"And now I live—O wherefore do I live?
And with that pang I prayed to be no more."
—WORDSWORTH.

IT was about nine o'clock that evening, and Maltravers was alone in his room. His carriage was at the door—his servants were arranging the luggage—he was going that night to Burleigh. London—society—the world—were grown hateful to him. His galled and indignant spirit demanded solitude. At this time, Lumley Ferrers abruptly entered.

"You will pardon my intrusion," said the latter, with his usual frankness—"but——"

"But what, sir—I am engaged."

"I shall be very brief. Maltravers, you are my old friend. I retain regard and affection for you, though our different habits have of late estranged us. I come to you from my cousin—from Florence—there has been some misunderstanding between you. I called on her to-day after you left the house. Her grief affected me. I have only just quitted her. She has been told by some gossip or other, some story or other—women are credulous, foolish creatures;—undeceive her, and, I dare say, all may be settled."

"Ferrers, if a man had spoken to me as Lady Florence did, his blood or mine must have flowed. And do you think that words that might have plunged me into the guilt of homicide if uttered by a man—I could ever pardon in one whom I had dreamed of for a wife? Never!"

"Pooh, pooh—women's words are wind.

Don't throw away so splendid a match for such a trifle."

"Do you too, sir, mean to impute mercenary motives to me?"

"Heaven forbid! You know I am no coward, but I really don't want to fight you. Come, be reasonable."

"I dare say you mean well, but the breach is final—all recurrence to it is painful and superfluous. I must wish you good evening."

"You have positively decided?"

"I have"

"Even if Lady Florence made the *amende honorable!*"

Nothing on the part of Lady Florence could alter my resolution. The woman whom an honorable man—an English gentleman—makes the partner of his life, ought never to listen to a syllable against his fair name: his honor is hers, and if her lips, that should breathe comfort in calumny, only serve to retail the lie—she may be beautiful, gifted, wealthy, and high-born, but he takes a curse to his arms. That curse I have escaped."

"And this I am to say to my cousin?"

"As you will. And now stay, Lumley Ferrers, and hear me. I neither accuse nor suspect you, I desire not to pierce your heart, and in this case I cannot fathom your motives; but if it should so have happened that you have, in any way, ministered to Lady Florence Lascelles' injurious opinions of my faith and honor, you will have much to answer for, and sooner or later there will come a day of reckoning between you and me."

"Mr. Maltravers, there can be no quarrel between us, with my cousin's fair name at stake, or else we should not now part without preparations for a more hostile meeting. I can bear your language. *I*, too, though no philosopher, can forgive. Come, man, you are heated—it is very natural;—let us part friends—your hand."

"If you can take my hand, Lumley, you are innocent, and I have wronged you."

Lumley smiled, and cordially pressed the hand of his old friend.

As he descended the stairs, Maltravers followed, and just as Lumley turned into Curzon Street, the carriage whirled rapidly past him, and by the lamps he saw the pale and stern face of Maltravers.

It was a slow, drizzling rain,—one of those unwholesome nights frequent in London towards the end of autumn. Ferrers, however, insensible to the weather, walked slowly and thoughtfully towards his cousin's house. He was playing for a mighty stake, and hitherto the cast was in his favor, yet he was uneasy and perturbed. His conscience was tolerably proof to all compunction, as much from the levity as from the strength of his nature; and (Maltravers removed), he trusted in his knowledge of the human heart, and the smooth speciousness of his manner, to win, at last, in the hand of Lady Florence, the object of his ambition. It was not on her affection, it was on her pique, her resentment, that he relied. "When a woman fancies herself slighted by the man she loves, the first person who proposes must be a clumsy wooer indeed, if he does not carry her away." So reasoned Ferrers, but yet he was ruffled and disquieted; the truth must be spoken,—able, bold, sanguine, and scornful as he was, his spirit quailed before that of Maltravers; he feared the lion of that nature when fairly aroused: his own character had in it something of a woman's—an unprincipled, gifted, aspiring, and subtle woman's, and in Maltravers—stern, simple, and masculine—he recognized the superior dignity of the "lords of the creation;" he was overawed by the anticipation of a wrath and revenge which he felt he merited, and which he feared might be deadly.

While gradually, however, his spirit recovered its usual elasticity, he came in the vicinity of Lord Saxingham's house, and suddenly, by a corner of the street, his arm was seized: to his inexpressible astonishment he recognized, in the muffled figure that accosted him, the form of Florence Lascelles.

"Good heavens!" he cried, "is it possible?—You, alone in the streets, at this hour, in such a night, too! How very wrong—how very imprudent!"

"Do not talk to me—I am almost mad as it is: I could not rest—I could not brave quiet, solitude,—still less, the face of my father—I could not!—but quick, what says he?—what excuse has he? Tell me everything—I will cling to a straw."

"And is this the proud Florence Lascelles?"

"No,—it is the humbled Florence Lascelles I have done with pride—speak to me!"

"Ah, what a treasure is such a heart! How can he throw it away!"

"Does he deny?"

"He denies nothing,—he expresses himself rejoiced to have escaped—such was his expression—a marriage in which his heart never was engaged. He is unworthy of you—forget him."

Florence shivered, and as Ferrers draw her arm in his own, her ungloved hand touched his, and the touch was like that of ice.

"What will the servants think?—what excuse can we make?" said Ferrers, when they stood beneath the porch.

Florence did not reply; but as the door opened, she said softly,—

"I am ill—ill," and clung to Ferrers with that unnerved and heavy weight which betokens faintness.

The light glared on her—the faces of the lacqueys betokened their undisguised astonishment. With a violent effort, Florence recovered herself, for she had *not* yet done with pride, swept through the hall with her usual stately step, slowly ascended the broad staircase, and gained the solitude of her own room to fall senseless on the floor.

BOOK. NINTH.

Αχέροντι νυμφευτὸς.—SOPH. *Antig.* 64.
I go, the bride of Acheron.

Μέλλοντα ταῦτα.—*Ib.* 1333.
These things are in the Future.

CHAPTER I.

* * "There the action lies
In its true nature * * * *
* * * What then? What rests?
Try what repentance can!"—*Hamlet.*

"I doubt he will be dead or ere I come."—*King John.*

It was a fine afternoon in December, when Lumley Ferrers turned from Lord Saxingham's door. The knockers were muffled—the windows on the third story were partially closed. There was sickness in that house.

Lumley's face was unusually grave; it was even sad. "So young—so beautiful," he muttered. "If ever I loved woman, I do believe I loved her:—that love must be my excuse. .... I repent of what I have done—but I could not foresee that a mere lover's stratagem was to end in such effects—the metaphysician was very right when he said, 'We only sympathize with feelings we know ourselves.' A little disappointment in love could not have hurt me much—it is d—d odd it should hurt her so. I am altogether out of luck: odd Templeton—I beg his pardon, Lord Vargrave—(by the by, he gets heartier every day—what a constitution he has!) seems cross with me. He did not like the idea that I should marry Lady Florence—and when I thought that vision might have been realized, hinted that I was disappointing some expectations he had formed; I can't make out what he means. Then, too, the government have offered that place to Maltravers instead of me. In fact, my star is not in the ascendant. Poor Florence though—I would really give a great deal to know her restored to health!—I have done a villainous thing, but I thought it only a clever one. However, regret is a fools passion. By Jupiter!—talking of fools, here comes Cesarini."

Wan, haggard, almost spectral, his hat over his brows, his dress neglected, his air reckless and fierce, Cesarini crossed the way, and thus accosted Lumley:—

"We have murdered her, Ferrers; and her ghost will haunt us to our dying day!"

"Talk prose; you know I am no poet. What do you mean?"

"She is worse to-day," groaned Cesarini, in a hollow voice. "I wander like a lost spirit round the house; I question all who come from it. Tell me—oh, tell me, is there hope?"

"I do, indeed, trust so," replied Ferrers, fervently. "The illness has only of late assumed an alarming appearance. At first it was merely a severe cold, caught by imprudent exposure one rainy night. Now they fear it has settled on the lungs; but if we could get her abroad, all might be well."

"You think so, honestly?"

"I do. Courage, my friend; do not reproach yourself; it has nothing to do with us. She was taken ill of a cold, not of a letter, man!"

"No, no; I judge her heart by my own. Oh, that I could recall the past! Look at me; I am the wreck of what I was; day and night the recollection of my falsehood haunts me with remorse."

"Pshaw!—we will go to Italy together,

and in your beautiful land, love will replace love."

"I am half resolved, Ferrers."

"Ha!—to do what?"

"To write—to reveal all to her."

The hardy complexion of Ferrers grew livid; his brow became dark with a terrible expression.

"Do so, and fall the next day by my hand; my aim, in slighter quarrel, never erred."

"Do you dare to threaten me?"

"Do you dare to betray me? Betray one, who, if he sinned, sinned on your account—in your cause; who would have secured to you the loveliest bride, and the most princely dower in England; and whose only offence against you is that he cannot command life and health?"

"Forgive me," said the Italian, with great emotion,—forgive me, and do not misunderstand; I would not have betrayed *you*,—there is honor among villains. I would have confessed only my own crime; I would never have revealed yours—why should I?—it is unnecessary."

"Are you in earnest?—are you sincere?"

"By my soul!"

"Then, indeed, you are worthy of my friendship. You will assume the whole forgery—an ugly word, but it avoids circumlocution—to be your own?"

"I will."

"Ferrers paused a moment and then stopped suddenly short.

"You will swear this!"

"By all that is holy."

"Then, mark me Cesarini; if to-morrow Lady Florence be worse, I will throw no obstacle in the way of your confession, should you resolve to make it; I will even use that influence which you leave me to palliate your offence, to win your pardon. And yet to resign your hopes—to surrender one so loved to the arms of one so hated—it is magnanimous—it is noble—it is above my standard! Do as you will."

Cesarini was about to reply, when a servant on horseback abruptly turned the corner, almost at full speed. He pulled in—his eye fell upon Lumley he dismounted.

"Oh, Mr. Ferrers," said the man, breathlessly, "I have been to your house; they told me I might find you at Lord Saxingham's—I was just going there——"

"Well, well, what is the matter?"

"My poor master, sir—my lord, I mean ——"

"What of him?"

"Had a fit, sir—the doctors are with him—my mistress—for my lord can't speak—sent me express for you."

"Lend me your horse—there, just lengthen the stirrups."

While the groom was engaged at the saddle, Ferrers turned to Cesarini. "Do nothing rashly," said he; "I would say, if I might, nothing at all, without consulting me; but, mind, I rely, at all events, on your promise—your oath."

"You may," said Cesarini, gloomily.

"Farewell, then," said Lumley, as he mounted; and in a few moments he was out of sight.

CHAPTER II.

"O world, thou wast the forest to this hart,
* * * * *
Dost thou here lie?"—*Julius Cæsar.*

As Lumley leapt from his horse at his uncle's door, the disorder and bustle of those demesnes, in which the severe eye of the master usually preserved a repose and silence as complete as if the affairs of life were carried on by clockwork, struck upon him sensibly. Upon the trim lawn, the old women employed in cleaning and weeding the walks were all assembled in a cluster, shaking their heads ominously in concert, and carrying on their comments in a confused whisper. In the hall, the housemaid (and it was the first housemaid whom Lumley had ever seen in that house, so invisibly were the wheels of the domestic machine carried on) was leaning on her broom, "swallowing with open mouth a footman's news," It was as if, with the first slackening of the rigid rein, human nature broke loose from the conventual stillness in which it had ever paced its peace path in that formal mansion.

"How is he?"

"My lord is better, sir; he has spoken I believe."

At this moment a young face, swollen and

red with weeping, looked down from the stairs; and presently Evelyn rushed breathlessly into the hall.

"Oh, come up—come up, cousin Lumley; he cannot, cannot die in your prerence; you always seem *so full* of life! He cannot die; you do not think he will die. Oh, take me with you, they won't let me go to him!"

"Hush, my dear little girl, hush; follow me lightly—that is right."

Lumley reached the door, tapped gently—entered; and the child also stole in unobserved, or at least unprevented. Lumley drew aside the curtains; the new lord was lying on his bed, with his head propped by pillows, his eyes wide open, with a glassy but not insensible stare, and his countenance fearfully changed. Lady Vargrave was kneeling on the other side of the bed, one hand clasped in her husband's, the other bathing his temples, and her tears falling, without sob or sound, fast and copiously down her pale fair cheeks.

Two doctors were conferring in the recess of the window; an apothecary was mixing drugs at a table; and two of the oldest female servants of the house were standing near the physicians, trying to overhear what was said.

"My dear, dear uncle, how are you?" asked Lumley.

"Ah, you are come then," said the dying man, in a feeble yet distinct voice; "that is well—I have much to say to you."

"But not now—not now—you are not strong enough," said the wife, imploringly.

The doctors moved to the bedside. Lord Vargrave waved his hand, and raised his head.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I feel as if death were hastening upon me; I have much need, while my senses remain, to confer with my nephew. Is the present a fitting time?—if I delay, are you sure that I shall have another?"

The doctors looked at each other.

"My lord," said one; "it may perhaps settle and relieve your mind to converse with your nephew; afterwards you may more easily compose yourself to sleep."

"Take this cordial, then," said the other doctor.

The sick man obeyed. One of the physicians approached Lumley, and beckoned him aside.

"Shall we send for his lordship's lawyer," whispered the leech.

"I am his heir-at-law," thought Lumley. "Why *no*, my dear sir—no, I think not, unless he expresses a desire to see him; doubtless, my poor uncle has already settled his worldly affairs. What is his state?"

The doctor shook his head. "I will speak to you, sir, after you have left his lordship."

"What is the matter there?" cried the patient, sharply and querulously. Clear the room—I would be alone with my nephew."

The doctors disappeared; the old woman reluctantly followed; when, suddenly, the little Evelyn sprang forward and threw herself on the breast of the dying man, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"My poor child!—my sweet child!—my own, own darling!" gasped out Lord Vargrave, folding his weak arms round her; "bless you—bless you! and God *will* bless you. My wife," he added, with a voice far more tender than Lumley had ever before heard him address to Lady Vargrave, "if these be the last words I utter to you, let them express all the gratitude I feel for you, for duties never more piously discharged: you did not love me, it is true; and in health and pride that knowledge often made me unjust to you. I have been severe—you have had much to bear—forgive me."

"Oh! do not talk thus; you have been nobler, kinder than my deserts. How much I owe you!—how little I have done in return!"

"I cannot bear this; leave me, my dear,—leave me. I may live yet—I hope I may—I do not want to die. The cup may pass from me. Go—go—and you, my child."

"Ah, let *me* stay."

Lord Vargrave kissed the little creature, as she clung to his neck, with passionate affection, and then, placing her in her mother's arms, fell back exhausted on his pillow. Lumley, with handkerchief to his eyes, opened the door to Lady Vargrave, who sobbed bitterly, and carefully closing it, resumed his station by his uncle.

When Lumley Ferrers left the room, his countanance was gloomy and excited rather than sad. He hurried to the room which he usually occupied, and remained there for some hours while his uncle slept—a long and sound

sleep. But the mother and the step-child (now restored to the sick room) did not desert their watch.

It wanted about an hour to midnight when the senior physician sought the nephew.

"Your uncle asks for you, Mr. Ferrers; and I think it right to say that his last moments approach. We have done all that can be done."

"Is he fully aware of his danger?"

"He is; and has spent the last two hours in prayer—it is a Christian's death-bed, sir."

"Humph!" said Ferrers, as he followed the physician.

The room was darkened—a single lamp, carefully shaded, burned on a table, on which lay the Book of Life in Death; and with awe, and grief on their faces, the mother and the child were kneeling beside the bed.

"Come here, Lumley," faltered forth the fast-dying man. "There are none here, but you three—nearest and dearest to me?—that is well. Lumley, then, you know all—my wife, he knows all. My child, give your hand to your cousin—so you are now plighted. When you grow up, Evelyn, you will know that it is my last wish and prayer that you should be the wife of Lumley Ferrers. In giving you this angel, Lumley, I atone to you for all seeming injustice. And to you, my child, I secure the rank and honors to which I have painfully climbed, and which I am forbidden to enjoy. Be kind to her, Lumley—you have a good and frank heart—let it be her shelter—she has never known a harsh word. God bless you all, and God forgive me—pray for me. Lumley, to-morrow you will be Lord Vargrave, and by and by" (here a ghastly but exultant smile flitted over the speaker's countenance) "you will be my Lady—Lady Vargrave. Lady—so—so—Lady Var——"

The words died on his trembling lips; he turned round, and though he continued to breathe for more than an hour, Lord Vargrave never uttered another syllable."

CHAPTER III.

* * * "Hopes and fears
Start up alarmed, and o'er life's narrow verge
Look down—on what?—a fathomless abyss."
—YOUNG.

"Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu!"
—*Much Ado about Nothing.*

THE wound which Maltravers had received was peculiarly severe and rankling. It is true that he had never been what is called violently in love with Florence Lascelles; but from the moment in which he had been charmed and surprised into the character of a declared suitor, it was consonant with his scrupulous and loyal nature to view only the bright side of Florence's gifts and qualities, and to seek to enamour his grateful fancy with her beauty, her genius, and her tenderness for himself. He had thus forced and formed his thoughts and hopes to centre all in one object; and Florence and the Future had grown words which conveyed the same meaning to his mind. Perhaps, he felt more bitterly her sudden and stunning accusations, couched as they were in language so unqualified, because they fell upon his pride rather than his affection, and were not softened away by the thousand excuses and remembrances which a passionate love would have invented and recalled. It was a deep, concentrated sense of injury and insult, that hardened and soured his whole nature—wounded vanity, wounded pride, and wounded honor. And the blow, too, came upon him at a time when he was most dissatisfied with all other prospects. He was disgusted with the littleness of the agents and springs of political life—he had formed a weary contempt of the barrenness of literary reputation. At thirty years of age he had necessarily outlived the sanguine elasticity of early youth, and he had already broken up many of those later toys in business and ambition which afford the rattle and the hobby-horse to our maturer manhood. Always asking for something too refined and too exalted for human life, every new proof of unworthiness in men and things saddened or revolted a mind still too fastidious for that quiet contentment with the world as it is, which we must all learn before we can make our philosophy practical, and our genius as fertile of the harvest, as it may be prodigal of the blossom. Haughty, solitary, and un-

social, the ordinary resources of mortified and disappointed men were not for Ernest Maltravers.

Rigidly secluded in his country retirement, he consumed the days in moody wanderings; and in the evenings he turned to books with a spirit disdainful and fatigued. So much had he already learned, that books taught him little that he did not already know. And the biographies of Authors, those ghost-like beings who seem to have had no life but in the shadow of their own haunting and imperishable thoughts, dimned the inspiration he might have caught from their pages. Those Slaves of the Lamp, those Silkworms of the of the Closet, how little had they enjoyed, how little had they lived! Condemned to a mysterious fate by the wholesale destinies of the world, they seemed born but to toil and to spin thoughts for the common crowd—and, their task performed in drudgery and in darkness, to die when no further service could be wrung from their exhaustion. Names had they been in life, and as names they lived for ever, in life as in death, airy and unsubstantial phantoms. It pleased Maltravers at this time to turn a curious eye towards the obscure and half-extinct philosophies of the ancient world. He compared the Stoics with the Epicureans —those Epicureans who had given their own version to the simple and abstemious utilitarianism of their master. He asked which was the wiser, to sharpen pain or to deaden pleasure—to bear all or to enjoy all—and, by a natural reaction which often happens to us in life, this man, hitherto so earnest, active-spirited, and resolved on great things, began to yearn for the drowsy pleasures of indolence.

The Garden grew more tempting than the Porch. He seriously revived the old alternative of the Grecian demi-god—might it not be wiser to abondon the grave pursuits to which he had been addicted, to dethrone the august but severe Ideal in his heart—to cultivate the light loves and voluptuous trifles of the herd —and to plant the brief space of youth yet left to him with the myrtle and the rose? As water flows over water, so new schemes rolled upon new—sweeping away every momentary impression, and leaving the surface facile equally to receive and to forget. Such is a common state with men of imagination in those crises of life, when some great revolution of designs and hopes unsettles elements too susceptible of every changing wind. And thus the weak are destroyed, while the strong relapse, after terrible but unknown convulsions, into that solemn harmony and order from which Destiny and God draw their uses to mankind.

It was from this irresolute contest between antagonist principles that Maltravers was aroused by the following letter from Florence Lascelles:

"For three days and three sleepless nights I have debated with myself whether or not I ought to address you. Oh, Ernest, were I what I was, in health, in pride, I might fear, that, generous as you are, you would misconstrue my appeal: but that is now impossible. Our union never can take place, and my hopes bound themselves to one sweet and melancholy hope —that you will remove from my last hours the cold and dark shadow of your resentment. We have both been cruelly deceived and betrayed. Three days ago I discovered the perfidy that had been practised against us. And then—ah, then, with all the weak human anguish of discovering it too late (*your curse is fulfilled*, Ernest!) I had at least one moment of proud, of exquisite rapture. Earnest Maltravers, the hero of my dreams, stood pure and lofty as of old—a thing it was not unworthy to love, to mourn, to die for. A letter in your hand-writing had been shown me, garbled and altered, as it seems—but I detected not the imposture—it was yourself, yourself alone, brought in false and horrible witness against yourself! And could you think that any other evidence, the words, the oaths of others, would have convicted you in my eyes? There you wronged me. But I deserved it—I had bound myself to secrecy—the seal is taken from my lips in order to be set upon my tomb. Ernest, beloved Ernest—beloved till the last breath is extinct—till the last throb of this heart is stilled!—write me one word of comfort and of pardon. You will believe what I have imperfectly written, for *you* ever trusted my faith, if you have blamed my faults. I am now comparatively happy—a word from you will make me blest. And Fate has, perhaps, been more merciful to both, than in our short-sighted and querulous human vision, we might, perhaps, believe; for now that the frame is brought low—and in the solitude of my chamber I can duly and humbly commune with mine own heart, I see the aspect of those faults which I once mistook for virtues—and feel, that had we been united, I, loving you ever, might not have constituted your happiness, and so, have known the misery of losing your affection. May He who formed you for glorious and yet all-unaccomplished purposes, strengthen you, when these eyes can no longer sparkle at your triumphs, nor weep at your lightest sorrow. You will go on in your broad and luminous career:—A few years, and my remembrance will have left but the vestige of a dream behind.—But, but—I can write no more. God bless you!"

CHAPTER IV.

"Oh, stop this headlong current of your goodness;
It comes too fast upon a feeble soul."
—DRYDEN: *Sebastian and Doras.*

THE smooth physician had paid his evening visit; Lord Saxingham had gone to a cabinet dinner, for Life must ever walk side by side with Death: and Lady Florence Lascelles was alone. It was a room adjoining her sleeping apartment—a room in which, in the palmy days of the brilliant and wayward heiress, she had loved to display her fanciful and peculiar taste. There had she been accustomed to muse, to write, to study—there had she first been dazzled by the novel glow of Ernest's undiurnal and stately thoughts—there had she first conceived the romance of girlhood, which had led her to confer with him, unknown—there had she first confessed to herself that fancy had begotten love—there had she gone through love's short and exhausting progress of lone emotion;—the doubt, the hope, the ecstasy; the reverse, the terror; the inanimate despondency, the agonized despair! And there, now, sadly and patiently, she awaited the gradual march of inevitable decay. And books and pictures, and musical instruments, and marble busts, half shadowed by classic draperies—and all the delicate elegancies of womanly refinement—still invested the chamber with a grace as cheerful as if youth and beauty were to be the occupants for ever—and the dark and noisome vault were not the only lasting residence for the things of clay!

Florence Lascelles was dying; but not indeed wholly of that common, if mystic malady—a broken heart. Her health, always delicate, because always preyed upon by a nervous, irritable, and feverish spirit, had been gradually and invisibly undermined, even before Ernest confessed his love. In the singular lustre of those large-pupilled eyes—in the luxuriant transparency of that glorious bloom,—the experienced might long since have traced the seeds which cradle death. In the night, when her restless and maddened heart so imprudently drove her forth to forestall the communication of Lumley (when she had sent to Maltravers, she scarce knew for what object, or with what hope)—in that night she was already in a high state of fever. The rain and the chill struck the growing disease within—her excitement gave it food and fire—delirium succeeded,—and in that most fearful and fatal of all medical errors, which robs the frame, when it most needs strength, of the very principle of life, they had bled her into a temporary calm, and into permanent and incurable weakness. Consumption seized its victim. The physicians who attended her were the most renowned in London, and Lord Saxingham was firmly persuaded that there was no danger. It was not in his nature to think that death would take so great a liberty with Lady Florence Lascelles, when there were so many poor people in the world whom there would be no impropriety in removing from it. But Florence knew her danger, and her high spirit did not quail before it.

Yet, when Cesarini, stung beyond endurance by the horrors of his remorse, wrote and confessed all his own share of the fatal treason, though, faithful to his promise, he concealed that of his accomplice,—then, ah, then, she did indeed repine at her doom, and long to look once more with the eyes of love and joy upon the face of the beautiful world. But the illness of the body usually brings out a latent power and philosophy of the soul, which health never knows; and God has mercifully ordained it as the customary lot of nature, that in proportion as we decline into the grave, the sloping path is made smooth and easy to our feet; and every day, as the films of clay are removed from our eyes, Death loses the false aspect of the spectre, and we fall at last into its arms as a weared child upon the bosom of its mother.

It was with a heavy heart that Lady Florence listened to the monotonous clicking of the clock that announced the departure of moments few, yet not precious, still spared to her. Her face buried in her hands, she bent over the small table beside her sofa, and indulged her melancholy thoughts. Bowed was the haughty crest, unnerved the elastic shape that had once seemed born for majesty aud command—no friends were near, for Florence had never made friends. Solitary had been her youth, and solitary were her dying hours.

As she thus sat and mused, a sound of carriage wheels in the street below slightly shook the room—it ceased—the carriage stopped at the door. Florence looked up. "No, no, it cannot be," she muttered; yet, while she spoke,

a faint flush passed over her sunken and faded cheek, and the bosom heaved beneath the robe, "a world too wide for its shrunk" proportions. There was a silence, which to her seemed interminable, and she turned away with a deep sigh, and a chill sinking of the heart.

At this time her woman entered with a meaning and flurried look.

"I beg your pardon, my lady—but——"

"But what?"

"Mr. Maltravers has called, and asked for your ladyship—so, my lady, Mr. Burton sent for me, and I said, my lady is too unwell to see any one; but Mr. Maltravers would not be denied, and he is waiting in my lord's library, and insisted on my coming up and 'nouncing him, my lady."

Now Mrs. Shinfield's words were not euphonistic, nor her voice mellifluous; but never had eloquence seemed to Florence so effective. Youth, love, beauty, all rushed back upon her at once, brightening her eyes, her cheek, and filling up ruin with sudden and deceitful light.

"Well," she said, after a pause, "let Mr. Maltravers come up."

"Come up, my lady? Bless me!—let me just 'range your hair—your ladyship is really in such dish-a-bill."

"Best as it is, Shinfield—he will excuse all—Go."

Mrs. Shinfield shrugged her shoulders and departed. A few moments more—a step on stairs, the creaking of the door,—and Maltravers and Florence were again alone. He stood motionless on the threshold. She had involuntarily risen, and so they stood opposite to each other, and the lamp fell full upon her face. Oh, heaven! when did that sight cease to haunt the heart of Maltravers! When shall that altered aspect not pass as a ghost before his eyes!—there it is, faithful and reproachful, alike in solitude and in crowds—it is seen in the glare of noon—it passes dim and wan at night, beneath the stars and the earth—it looked into his heart, and left its likeness there for ever and for ever! Those cheeks, once so beautifully rounded, now sunken into lines and hollows—the livid darkness beneath the eyes—the whitened lip—the sharp, anxious, worn expression, which had replaced that glorious and beaming *regard*, from which all the life of genius, all the sweet pride of womanhood had glowed forth, and in which not only the intelligence, but the eternity of the soul, seemed visibly wrought!

There he stood aghast and appalled. At length a low grown broke from his lips—he rushed forward, sank on his knees beside her, and clasping both her hands, sobbed aloud as he covered them with kisses. All the iron of his strong nature was broken down, and his emotions, long silenced, and now uncontrollable and resistless, were something terrible to behold!

"Do not—do not weep so," murmured Lady Florence, frightened by his vehemence; "I am sadly changed, but the fault is mine—Ernest, it is mine; best, kindest, gentlest, how could I have been so mad!—and you forgive me? I am yours again—a little while yours. Ah, do not grieve while I am so blessed!"

As she spoke, her tears—tears from a source how different from that whence broke the scorching and intolerable agony of his own, fell soft upon his bended head, and the hands that still convulsively strained hers. Maltravers looked wildly up into her countenance and shuddered as he saw her attempt to smile. He rose abruptly, threw himself into a chair and covered his face. He was seeking, by a violent effort, to master himself, and it was only by the heaving of his chest, and now and then a gasp as for breath, that he betrayed the stormy struggle within.

Florence gazed at him a moment in bitter, in almost selfish penitence. "And this was the man who seemed to me so callous to the softer sympathies—this was the heart I trampled upon—this the nature I disturbed!"

She came near him, trembling and with feeble steps—she laid her hand upon his shoulder, and the fondness of love came over her, and she wound her arms around him.

"It is our fate—it is my fate," said Maltravers at last, awakening as from a hideous dream, and in a hollow but calm voice—"we are the things of destiny, and the wheel has crushed us. It is an awful state of being this human life!—What is wisdom—virtue—faith to men—piety to heaven—all the nurture we bestow on ourselves—all our desire to win a loftier sphere, when we are thus the tools of the merest chance—the victims of the pettiest villany; and our very existence—our very

senses almost, at the mercy of every traitor and every fool?"

There was something in Ernest's voice, as well as in his reflections, which appeared so unnaturally calm and deep that it startled Florence with a fear more acute than his previous violence had done. He rose, and muttering to himself, walked to and fro, as if insensible of her presence—in fact he was so. At length he stopped short, and fixing his eyes upon Lady Florence, said, in a whispered and thrilling tone,—

"Now, then, the name of our undoer?"

"No, Ernest, no—never, unless you promise me to forego the purpose which I read in your eyes. He has confessed—he is penitent—I have forgiven him—you will do so too!"

"His name!" repeated Maltravers, and his face, before very flushed, was unnaturally pale.

"Forgive him—promise me."

"His name, I say,—his name?"

"Is this kind?—you terrify me—you will kill me!" faltered out Florence, and she sank on the sofa exhausted; her nerves, now so weakened, were perfectly unstrung by his vehemence, and she wrung her hands and wept piteously.

"You will not tell me his name?" said Maltravers softly. "Be it so. I will ask no more. I can discover it myself. Fate the Avenger will reveal it."

At that thought he grew more composed; and as Florence wept on, the unnatural concentration and fierceness of his mind again gave way, and, seating himself beside her, he uttered all that could soothe, and comfort, and console. And Florence *was* soon soothed! And there, while over their heads the grim skeleton was holding the funeral pall, they again exchanged their vows, and again, with feelings fonder than of old, spoke of love.

CHAPTER V.

* * * "Erichtho, then,
Breathes her dire murmurs which enforce him bear
Her baneful secrets to the spirits of horror."
—MARLOW.

WITH a heavy step Maltravers ascended the stairs of his lonely house that night, and heavily, with a suppressed groan, did he sink upon the first chair that proffered rest

It was intensely cold. During his long interview with Lady Florence, his servant had taken the precaution to go to Seamore Place, and make some hasty preparations for the owner's return. But the bed-room looked comfortless and bare, the curtains were taken down, the carpets were taken up, (a single man's housekeeper is wonderfully provident in these matters: the moment his back is turned, she bustles, she displaces, she exults; "things can be put a little to rights!") Even the fire would not burn clear, but gleamed sullen and fitful from the smothering fuel. It was a large chamber, and the lights imperfectly filled it. On the table lay parliamentary papers, and pamphlets, and bills, and presentation-books from younger authors,—evidences of the teeming business of that restless machine the world. But of all this Maltravers was not sensible: the winter frost numbed not his feverish veins. His servant, who loved him, as all who saw much of Maltravers did, fidgeted anxiously about the room and plied the sullen fire, and laid out the comfortable dressing-robe, and placed wine on the table, and asked questions which were not answered, and pressed service which was not heeded.

The little wheels of life go on, even when the great wheel is paralyzed or broken. Maltravers was, if I may so express it, in a kind of mental trance. His emotions had left him thoroughly exhausted. He felt that torpor which succeeds, and is again the precursor of, great woe. At length he was alone, and the solitude half unconsciously restored him to the sense of his heavy misery. For it may be observed, that when misfortune has stricken us home, the presence of any one seems to interfere between the memory and the heart. Withdraw the intruder, and the lifted hammer falls at once upon the anvil! He rose as the door closed on his attendant—rose with a start, and pushed the hat from his gathered brows. He walked for some moments to and fro, and the air of the room, freezing as it was, oppressed him.

There are times when the arrow quivers within us—in which all space seems too confined. Like the wounded hart we could fly on for ever; there is a vague desire of escape—a yearning, almost insane, to get out from our own selves: the soul struggles to flee away and take the wings of the morning.

verted to the cause of their unhappy dissension. Nor from that night did he once give way to whatever might be his more agonized and fierce emotions—he never affected to reproach himself—he never bewailed with a vain despair their approaching separation. Whatever it cost him, he stood collected and stoical in the intense power of his self-control. He had but one object—one desire—one hope—to save the last hours of Florence Lascelles from every pang—to brighten and smoothe the passage across the Solemn Bridge. His forethought, his presence of mind, his care, his tenderness, never forsook him for an instant; they went beyond the attributes of men, they went into all the fine, the indescribable minutiæ by which woman makes herself "in pain and anguish" the "ministering angel." It was as if he had nerved and braced his whole nature to one duty—as if that duty were more felt than affection itself—as if he were resolved that Florence should not remember that *she had no mother!*

And oh, then, how Florence loved him! how far more luxurious in its grateful and clinging fondness, was that love, than the wild and jealous fire of their earlier connection! Her own character, as is often the case in lingering illness, became incalculably more gentle and softened down, as the shadows closed around it. She loved to make him read and talk to her—and her ancient poetry of thought now grew mellowed, as it were, into religion, which is indeed poetry with a stronger wing. . . . . There was a world beyond the grave—there was life out of the chrysalis sleep of death—they would yet be united. And Maltravers, who was a solemn and intense believer in the GREAT HOPE, did not neglect the purest and highest of all the fountains of solace.

Often in that quiet room, in that gorgeous mansion which had been the scene of all vain or worldly schemes—of flirtations and feastings, and political meetings and cabinet dinners, and all the bubbles of the passing wave—often there did these persons, whose position to each other had been so suddenly and so strangely changed—converse on those matters—daring and divine—which "make the bridal of the earth and sky."

"How fortunate am I," said Florence, one day, "that my choice fell on one who thinks as you do! How your words elevate and exalt me!—yet once I never dreamt of asking your creed on these questions. It is in sorrow or sickness that we learn why Faith was given as a soother to man—Faith, which is Hope with a holier name—hope that knows neither deceit nor death. Ah, how wisely do you speak of the *philosophy* of belief! It is, indeed, the telescope through which the stars grow large upon our gaze. And to you, Ernest, my beloved—comprehended and known at last—to you I leave, when I am gone, that monitor—that friend;—you will know yourself what you teach to me. And when you look not on the heavens alone but in all space—on all the illimitable creation, you will know that I am there! For the home of a spirit is whereever spreads the Universal Presence of God. And to what numerous stages of being, what paths, what duties, what active and glorious tasks in other worlds may we not be reserved—perhaps to know and share them together, and mount age after age higher in the scale of being. For surely in heaven there is no pause or torpor—we do not lie down in calm and unimprovable repose. Movement and progress will remain the law and condition of existence. And there will be efforts and duties for us above as there have been below."

It was in this theory, which Maltravers shared, that the character of Florence, her overflowing life and activity of thought—her aspirations, her ambition were still displayed. It was not so much to the calm and rest of the grave that she extended her unreluctant gaze, as to the light and glory of a renewed and progressive existence.

It was while thus they sat, the low voice of Ernest, tranquil yet half trembling with the emotions he sought to restrain—sometimes sobering, sometimes yet more elevating, the thoughts of Florence, that Lord Vargrave was announced, and Lumley Ferrers, who had now succeeded to that title, entered the room. It was the first time that Florence had seen him since the death of his uncle—the first time Maltravers had seen him since the evening so fatal to Florence. Both started—Maltravers rose and walked to the window. Lord Vargrave took the hand of his cousin and pressed it to his lips in silence, while his looks betokened feelings that for once were genuine.

"You see, Lumley, I am resigned," said

Florence, with a sweet smile. "I am resigned and happy."

Lumley glanced at Maltravers, and met a cold, scrutinizing, piercing eye, from which he shrank with some confusion. He recovered himself in an instant.

"I am rejoiced, my cousin, I *am* rejoiced," said he, very earnestly, "to see Maltravers here again. Let us now hope for the best."

Maltravers walked deliberately up to Lumley, "Will you take my hand *now*, too?" said he, with deep meaning in his tone.

"More willingly than ever," said Lumley; and he did not shrink as he said it.

"I am satisfied," replied Maltravers, after a pause, and in a voice that expressed more than his words.

There is in some natures so great a hoard of generosity, that it often dulls their acuteness. Maltravers could not believe that frankness could be wholly a mask—it was an hypocrisy he knew not of. He himself was not incapable, had circumstances so urged him, of great crimes; nay, the design of one crime lay at that moment deadly and dark within his heart, for he had some passions which is so resolute a character could produce, should the wind waken them into storm, dire and terrible effects. Even at the age of thirty, it was yet uncertain whether Ernest Maltravers might become an exemplary or an evil man. But he could sooner have strangled a foe than taken the hand of a man whom he had once betrayed.

"I love to think you friends," said Florence, gazing at them affectionately, "and to you, at least, Lumley, such friendship should be a blessing. I always loved you much and dearly, Lumley—loved you as a brother, though our characters often jarred."

Lumley winced. "For Heaven's sake," he cried, "do not speak thus tenderly to me—I cannot bear it, and look on you and think——"

"That I am dying. Kind words become us best, when our words are approaching to the last. But enough of this—I grieved for your loss."

"My poor uncle!" said Lumley, eagerly changing the conversation—"the shock was sudden; and melancholy duties have absorbed me so till this day that I could not come even to you. It soothed me, however, to learn, in answer to my daily inquiries, that Ernest was here. For my part," he added with a faint smile, "I have had duties as well as honors devolved upon me. I am left guardian to an heiress, and bethrothed to a child."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, my poor uncle was so fondly attached to his wife's daughter, that he has left her the bulk of his property; a very small estate—not 2000*l.* a year—goes with the title—(a new title, too, which requires twice as much to carry it off and make its pinchbeck pass for gold). In order, however, to serve a double purpose, secure to his *protégée* his own beloved peerage and atone to his nephew for the loss of wealth—he has left it a last request, that I should marry the young lady over whom I am appointed guardian, when she is eighteen—alas! I shall then be at the other side of forty! If she does not take to so mature a bridegroom, she loses thirty—only thirty, of the 200,000*l.* settled upon her, which goes to me as a sugar-plum after the nauseous draught of the young lady's 'No.' Now, you know all. His widow, really an exemplary young woman, has a jointure of 1500*l.* a-year, and the villa. It is not much, but she is contented."

The lightness of the new peer's tone revolted Maltravers, and he turned impatiently away. But Lord Vargrave, resolving not to suffer the conversation to glide back to sorrowful subjects which he always hated, turned round to Ernest, and said, "Well, my dear Ernest, I see by the papers that you are to have N——'s late appointment—it is a very rising office. I congratulate you."

"I have refused," said Maltravers, drily.

"Bless me!—indeed!—why?"

Ernest bit his lip, and frowned; but his glance wandering unconsciously at Florence, Lumley thought he detected the true reply to his question, and became mute.

The conversation was afterwards embarrassed and broken up; Lumley went away as soon as he could, and Lady Florence that night had a severe fit, and could not leave her bed the next day. That confinement she had struggled against to the last; and now day by day, it grew more frequent and inevitable. The steps of Death became accelerated. And Lord Saxingham, wakened at last to the mournful truth, took his place by his daughter's side, and forgot that he was a cabinet minister

CHAPTER VII.

" Away, my friends, why take such pains to know,
What some brave marble soon in church shall show?"
—CRABBE.

IT may seem strange, but Maltravers had never loved Lady Florence as he did now. Was it the perversity of human nature that makes the things of mortality dearer to us in proportion as they fade from our hopes, like birds whose hues are only unfolded when they take wing and vanish amidst the skies; or was it that he had ever doted more on loveliness of mind than that of form, and the first bloomed out the more, the more the last decayed? A thing to protect, to soothe, to shelter—oh, how dear it is to the pride of man! The haughty woman who can stand alone and requires no leaning place in our heart, loses the spell of her sex.

I pass over those stages of decline gratuitously painful to record; and which, in this case, mine cannot be the cold and technical hand to trace. At length came that time when physicians could define within a few days the final hour of release. And latterly the mocking pruderies of rank had been laid aside, and Maltravers had, for some hours at least in the day, taken his watch beside the couch to which the admired and brilliant Florence Lascelles was now almost constantly reduced. But her high and heroic spirit was with her to the last. To the last she could endure, love, and hope. One day when Maltravers left his post, she besought him, with more solemnity than usual, to return that evening. She fixed the precise hour, and she sighed heavily when he departed. Maltravers paused in the hall to speak to the physician, who was just quitting Lord Saxingham's library. Ernest spoke to him for some moments calmly, and when he heard the fiat, he betrayed no other emotion than a slight quiver of the lip! "I must not weep for her yet," he muttered, as he turned from the door. He went thence to the house of a gentleman of his own age, with whom he had formed that kind of acquaintance which never amounts to familiar friendship, but rests upon mutual respect, and is often more ready than professed friendship itself to confer mutual service. Colonel Danvers was a man who usually sat next to Maltravers in parliament; they voted together, and thought alike on principles both of politics and honor: they would have lent thousands to each other without bond or memorandum; and neither ever wanted a warm and indignant advocate when he was abused behind his back in presence of the other.

Yet their tastes and ordinary habits were not congenial; and when they met in the streets, they never said, as they would to companions they esteemed less, "Let us spend the day together!" Such forms of acquaintance are not uncommon among honorable men who have already formed habits and pursuits of their own, which they cannot surrender even to friendship. Colonel Danvers was not at home—they believed he was at his club, of which Ernest also was a member. Thither Maltravers bent his way. On arriving, he found that Danvers had been at the club an hour ago, and left word that he should shortly return. Maltravers entered and quietly sate down. The room was full of its daily loungers; but he did not shrink from, he did not even heed, the crowd. He felt not the desire of solitude—there was solitude enough within him. Several distinguished public men were there, grouped around the fire, and many of the hangers-on and satellites of political life; they were talking with eagerness and animation, for it was a season of great party-conflict. Strange as it may seem, though Maltravers was then scarcely sensible of their conversation, it all came back vividly and faithfully on him afterwards, in the first hours of reflection on his own future plans, and served to deepen and consolidate his disgust of the world. They were discussing the character of a great statesman whom, warmed but by the loftiest and purest motives, they were unable to understand. Their gross suspicions, their coarse jealousies, their calculations of patriotism by place, all that strips the varnish from the face of that fair harlot—Political Ambition—sank like caustic into his spirit. A gentleman, seeing him sit silent, with his hat over his moody brows, civilly extended to him the paper he was reading.

"It is the second edition; you will find the last French express."

"Thank you," said Maltravers; and the civil man started as he heard the brief answer; there was something so inexpressibly prostrate and broken-spirited in the voice that uttered it.

Maltravers' eyes fell mechanically on the columns, and caught his own name. That work which, in the fair retirement of Temple Grove it had so pleased him to compose—in every page and every thought of which Florence had been consulted—which was so inseparably associated with her image, and glorified by the light of her kindred genius—was just published. It had been completed long since; but the publisher had, for some excellent reason of the craft, hitherto delayed its appearance. Maltravers knew nothing of its publication; he had meant, after his return to town, to have sent to forbid its appearance; but his thoughts of late had crushed everything else out of his memory—he had forgotten its existence. And now, in all the pomp and parade of authorship, it was sent into the world! *Now, now*, when it was like an indecent mockery of the Bed of Death—a sacrilege, an impiety! There is a terrible disconnection between the author and the man—the author's life and the man's life—the eras of visible triumph may be those of the most intolerable, though unrevealed and unconjectured anguish. The book that delighted us to compose may first appear in the hour when all things under the sun are joyless. This had been Ernest Maltravers' most favored work. It had been conceived in a happy hour of great ambition—it had been executed with that desire of truth which, in the mind of genius, becomes ART. How little in the solitary hours stolen from sleep, had he thought of self, and that laborer's hire called "fame!" how had he dreamed that he was promulgating secrets to make his kind better, and wiser, and truer to the great aims of life!

How had Florence, and Florence alone, understood the beatings of his heart in every page! *And now!*—it so chanced that the work was reviewed in the paper he read—it was not only hostile criticism, it was a personally abusive diatribe, a virulent invective. All the motives that can darken or defile were ascribed to him. All the mean spite of some mean mind was sputtered forth. Had the writer known the awful blow that awaited Maltravers at that time, it is not in man's nature but that he would have shrunk from this petty gall upon the wrung withers; but, as I have said, there is a terrible disconnection between the author and the man. The first is always at our mercy—of the last we know nothing. At such an hour Maltravers could feel none of the contempt that proud—none of the wrath that vain—minds fell at these stings. He could feel nothing but an undefined abhorrence of the world, and of the aims and objects he had pursued so long. Yet that even he did not *then* feel. He was in a dream; but as men remember dreams, so when he awoke did he loathe his own former aspirations, and sicken at their base rewards. It was the first time since his first year of inexperienced authorship, that abuse had had the power even to vex him for a moment. But here, when the cup was already full, was the drop that overflowed. The great column of his past world was gone, and all else seemed crumbling away.

At length Colonel Danvers entered. Maltravers drew him aside, and they left the club.

"Danvers," said the latter, "the time in which I told you I should need your services is near at hand; let me see you, if possible to-night."

"Certainly—I shall be at the House till eleven. After that hour you will find me at home."

"I thank you."

"Cannot this matter be arranged amicably?"

"No, it is a quarrel of life and death."

"Yet the world is really growing too enlightened for these old mimicries of single combat."

"There are some cases in which human nature and its deep wrongs, will be ever stronger than the world and its philosophy. Duels and wars belong to the same principle; both are sinful on light grounds and poor pretexts. But it is not sinful for a soldier to defend his country from invasion, nor for man with a man's heart, to vindicate truth and honor with his life. The robber that asks me for money I am allowed to shoot. Is the robber that tears from me treasures never to be replaced, to go free? These are the inconsistencies of a pseudo-ethics, which, as long as we are made of flesh and blood, we can never subscribe to."

"Yet the ancients," said Danvers, with a smile, "were as passionate as ourselves and they dispensed with duels."

"Yes, because they resorted to assassination?" answered Maltravers, with a gloomy

frown. "As in revolutions all law is suspended, so are there stormy events and mighty injuries in life, which are as revolutions to individuals. Enough of this—it is no time to argue like the schoolmen. When we meet you shall know all, and you will judge like me. Good day!"

"What, are you going already? Maltravers, you look ill, your hand is feverish—you should take advice."

Maltravers smiled—but the smile was not like his own—shook his head, and strode rapidly away.

Three of the London clocks, one after the other, had told the hour of nine, as a tall and commanding figure passed up the street towards Saxingham House. Five doors before you reach that mansion there is a crossing, and at this spot stood a young man, in whose face youth itself looked sapless and blasted. It was then March;—the third of March; the weather was unusually severe and biting, even for that angry month. There had been snow in the morning, and it lay white and dreary in various ridges along the street. But the wind was not still in the keen but quiet sharpness of frost; on the contrary, it howled almost like a hurricane through the desolate thoroughfares, and the lamps flickered unsteadily in the turbulent gusts. Perhaps it was these blasts which increased the haggardness of aspect in the young man I have mentioned. His hair, which was much longer than is commonly worn, was tossed wildly from cheeks preternaturally shrunken, hollow, and lived: and the frail, thin form seemed scarcely able to support itself against the rush of the winds.

As the tall figure, which, in its masculine stature and proportions, and a peculiar and nameless grandeur of bearing, strongly contrasted that of the younger man,—now came to the spot where the streets met, it paused abruptly.

"You are here once more, Castruccio Cesarini—it is well!" said the low but ringing voice of Ernest Maltravers. "This, I believe, will not be our last interview to-night."

"I ask you, sir," said Cesarini, in a tone in which pride struggled with emotion—"I ask you to tell me how she is—whether you know—I cannot speak——"

"Your work is nearly done," answered Maltravers. "A few hours more, and your victim, for she is yours, will bear her tale to the Great Judgment-Seat. Murderer as you are, tremble, for your own hour approaches!"

"She dies, and I cannot see her! and you are permitted that last glimpse of human perfectness—*you* who never loved her as I did—you!—hated and detested!—you——"

Cesarini paused, and his voice died away, choked in his own convulsive gaspings for breath.

Maltravers looked at him from the height of his erect and lofty form, with a merciless eye; for in this one quarter Maltravers had shut out pity from his soul.

"Weak criminal!" said he, "hear me. You received at my hands forbearance, friendship, fostering and anxious care. When your own follies plunged you into penury, mine was the unseen hand that plucked you from famine, or the prison. I strove to redeem, and save, and raise you, and endow your miserable spirit with the thirst and the power of honor and independence. The agent of that wish was Florence Lascelles—you repaid us well!—a base and fraudulent forgery, attaching meanness to me, fraught with agony and death to her. Your conscience at last smote you—you revealed to her your crime—one spark of manhood made you reveal it also to myself. Fresh as I was in that moment, from the contemplation of the ruin you had made, I curbed the impulse that would have crushed the life from your bosom. I told you to live on while life was left to *her*. If she recovered I could forgive, if she died I must avenge, We entered into that solemn compact, and in a few hours the bond will need the seal—it is the blood of one of us. Castruccia Cesarini, there is justice in heaven. Deceive yourself not—you will fall by my hand. When the hour comes, you will hear from me. Let me pass—I have no more now to say."

Every syllable of this speech was uttered with that thrilling distinctness which seems as if the depth of the heart spoke in the voice. But Cesarini did not appear to understand its import. He seized Maltravers by the arm, and looked in his face with a wild and menacing glare.

"Did you tell me she was dying?" he said "I ask you that question, why do you not answer me? Oh, by the way, you threaten me with your vengence. Know you not that I

long to meet you front to front and to the death? Did I not tell you so—did I not try to move your slow blood—to insult you into a conflict in which I should have gloried? Yet then you were marble."

"Because *my* wrong I could forgive, and *hers*—there was a hope that *hers* might not need the atonement. Away!"

Maltravers shook the hold of the Italian from his arm, and passed on. A wild, sharp yell of despair rang after him, and echoed in his ear as he strode the long, dim, solitary stairs that led to the death-bed of Florence Lascelles.

Maltravers entered the room adjoining that which contained the sufferer,—the same room, still gay, and cheerful, in which had been his first interview with Florence since their reconciliation.

Here he found the physician dozing in a fauteuil. Lady Florence had fallen asleep during the last two or three hours. Lord Saxingham was in his own apartment, deeply and noisily affected, for it was not thought that Florence could survive the night.

Maltravers sate himself quietly down. Before him, on a table, lay several manuscript books gaily and gorgeously bound; he mechanically opened them. Florence's fair, noble, Italian characters met his eye in every page. Her rich and active mind—her love for poetry—her thirst for knowledge—her indulgence of deep thought—spoke from those pages like the ghosts of herself. Often, underscored with the marks of her approbation, he chanced upon extracts from his own works, sometimes upon reflections by the writer herself, not inferior in truth and depth to his own;—snatches of wild verse never completed, but of a power and energy beyond the delicate grace of lady-poets; brief, vigorous criticisms on books above the common holiday studies of the sex;—indignant and sarcastic aphorisms on the real world, with high and sad bursts of feeling upon the ideal one; all, chequering and enriching the varied volumes, told of the rare gifts with which this singular girl was endowed—a herbal, as it were, of withered blossoms that might have borne Hesperian fruits. And sometimes in these outpourings of the full mind and laden heart were allusions to himself, so tender and so touching—the pencilled outline of his features traced by memory in a thousand aspects—the reference to former interviews and conversations—the dates and hours marked with a woman's minute and treasuring care!—all these tokens of genius and of love spoke to him with a voice that said, "And this creature is lost to you for ever; you never appreciated her till the time for her departure was irrevocably fixed!"

Maltravers uttered a deep groan; all the past rushed over him. Her romantic passion for one yet unknown—her interest in his glory—her zeal for his life of life, his spotless and haughty name. It was as if with her, Fame and Ambition were dying also, and henceforth nothing but common clay and sordid motives were to be left on earth.

How sudden—how awfully sudden had been the blow! True, there had been an absence of some months in which the change had operated. But absence is a blank—a nonentity. He had left her in apparent health—in the tide of prosperity and pride. He saw her again—stricken down in body and temper—chastened—humbled—dying. And this being, so bright and lofty, how had she loved him! Never had he been so loved, except in that morning dream haunted by the vision of the lost and dim remembered Alice. Never on earth could he be so loved again. The air and aspect of the whole chamber grew to him painful and oppresive. It was full of her—the owner! There the harp, which so well became her muselike form that it was associated with her like a part of herself! There the pictures, fresh and glowing from her hand,—the grace—the harmony—the classic and simple taste everywhere displayed!

Rousseau has left to us an immortal portrait of the lover waiting for the first embraces of his mistress. But to wait with a pulse as feverish, a brain as dizzy, for her last look—to await the moment of despair, not rapture—to feel the slow and dull time as palpable a load upon the heart, yet to shrink from your own impatience, and wish that the agony of suspense might endure for ever—this, oh, this is a picture of intense passion—of flesh and blood reality—of the rare and solemn epochs of our mysterious life—which had been worthier the genius of that "Apostle of Affliction!"

At length the door opened; the favorite attendant of Florence looked in.

"Is Mr. Maltravers there? O, sir, my lady is awake and would see you."

Maltravers rose, but his feet were glued to the ground, his sinking heart stood still—it was a mortal terror that possessed him. With a deep sigh he shook off the numbing spell, and passed to the bedside of Florence.

She sate up, propped by pillows, and as he sank beside her, and clasped her wan, transparent hand, she looked at him with a smile of pitying love.

"You have been very, very kind to me," she said, after a pause, and with a voice which had altered even since the last time he heard it. "You have made that part of life from which human nature shrinks with dread, the happiest and the brightest of all my short and vain existence. My own dear Ernest—Heaven reward you!"

A few grateful tears dropped from her eyes, and they fell on the hand which she bent her lips to kiss.

"It was not here—not amidst streets and the noisy abodes of anxious, worldly men—nor was it in this harsh and dreary season of the year, that I could have wished to look my last on earth. Could I have seen the face of Nature—could I have watched once more with the summer sun amidst those gentle scenes we loved so well, Death would have had no difference from sleep. But what matters it? With you there are summer and Nature everywhere?"

Maltravers raised his face, and their eyes met in silence—it was a long, fixed gaze which spoke more than all words could. Her head dropped on his shoulder, and there it lay, passive and motionless, for some moments. A soft step glided into the room—it was the unhappy father's. He came to the other side of his daughter, and sobbed convulsively.

She then raised herself, and even in the shades of death, a faint blush passed over her cheek.

"My good, dear father, what comfort will it give you hereafter to think how fondly you spoiled your Florence!"

Lord Saxingham could not answer: he clasped her in his arms and wept over her Then he broke away—looked on her with a shudder—

"O God!" he cried, "she is dead—she is dead!"

Maltravers started. The physician kindly approached, and taking lord Saxingham's hand, led him from the room—he went mute and obedient like a child.

But the struggle was not yet past. Florence once more opened her eyes, and Maltravers uttered a cry of joy. But along those eyes the film was darkening rapidly, as still through the mist and shadow, they sought the beloved countenance which hung over her, as if to breathe life into waning life. Twice her lips moved, but her voice failed her, she shook her head sadly.

Maltravers hastily held to her mouth a cordial which lay ready on the table near her, but scarce had it moistened her lips, when her whole frame grew heavier and heavier, in his clasp. Her head once more sank upon his bosom—she thrice gasped wildly for breath—and at length raising her hand on high, life struggled into its expiring ray.

"*There* — above! — Ernest — that name—Ernest!"

Yes, that name was the last she uttered; she was evidently conscious of that thought, for a smile, as her voice again faltered—a smile sweet and serene—that smile never seen but on the faces of the dying and the dead—borrowed from a light that is not of this world—settled slowly on her brow, her lips, her whole countenance: still she breathed, but the breath grew fainter; at length, without murmur, sound, or struggle, it passed away—the head dropped from his bosom—the form fell from his arms—all was over!

CHAPTER VIII.

* * * "Is this the promised end?"—*Lear.*

It was two hours after that scene before Maltravers left the house. It was then just on the stroke of the first hour of morning. To him, while he walked through the streets, and the sharp winds howled on his path, it was as if a strange and wizard life, had passed into and supported him—a sort of drowsy,

dull existence. He was like a sleep-walker, unconscious of all around him; yet his steps went safe and free; and the one thought that possssed his being—into which all intellect seemed shrunk—the thought, not fiery nor vehement, but calm, stern, and solemn—the thought of revenge—seemed, as it were, grown his soul itself. He arrived at the door of Colonel Danvers, mounted the stairs, and as his friend advanced to meet him, said calmly, "Now, then, the hour has arrived."

"But what would you do now?"

"Come with me, and you shall learn."

"Very well, my carriage is below. Will you direct the servants?"

Maltravers nodded, gave his orders to the careless footman, and the two friends were soon driving through the less known and courtly regions of the giant city. It was then that Maltravers concisely stated to Danvers the fraud that had been practised by Cesarini.

"You will go with me now," concluded Maltravers, "to his house. To do him justice, he is no coward; he has not shrunk from giving me his address, nor will he shrink from the atonement I demand. I shall wait below while you arrange our meeting—at daybreak for to-morrow."

Danvers was astonished and even appalled by the discovery made to him. There was something so unusual and strange in the whole affair. But neither his experience, nor his principles of honor, could suggest any alternative to the plan proposed. For though not regarding the cause of quarrel in the same light as Maltravers, and putting aside all question as to the right of the latter to constitute himself the champion of the betrothed, or the avenger of the dead, it seemed clear to the soldier that a man, whose confidential letter had been garbled by another for the purpose of slandering his truth and calumniating his name, had no option but contempt, or the sole retribution (wretched though it be) which the customs of the higher class permit to those who live within its pale. But contempt for a wrong that a sorrow so tragic had followed —was *that* option in human philosophy?

The carriage stopped at a door in a narrow lane in an obscure surburb. Yet, dark as all the houses around were, lights were seen in the upper windows of Cesarini's residence, passing to and fro; and scarce had the servant's loud knock echoed through the dim thoroughfare, ere the door was opened. Danvers descended, and entered the passage—"Oh, sir, I am so glad you are come!" said an old woman, pale and trembling; "he do take on so!"

"There is no mistake," asked Danvers halting; "an Italian gentleman named Cesarini lodges here?"

"Yes, sir, poor cretur—I sent for you to come to him—for says I to my boy, says I——"

"Whom do you take me for?"

"Why, la, sir, you be's the doctor, ben't you?"

Danvers made no reply; he had a mean opinion of the courage of one who could act dishonorably; he thought there was some design to cheat his friend out of his revenge; accordingly he ascended the stairs, motioning the woman to precede him.

He came back to the door of the carriage in a few minutes. "Let us go home, Maltravers," said he, "this man is not in a state to meet you."

"Ha!" cried Maltravers, frowning darkly, and all his long-smothered indignation rushing like fire through every vein of his body; "would he shrink from the atonement?" he pushed Danvers impatiently aside, leapt from the carriage, and rushed up stairs.

Danvers followed.

Heated, wrought up, furious, Ernest Maltravers burst into a small and squalid chamber; from the closed doors of which, through many chinks, had gleamed the light that told him Cesarini was within. And Cesarini's eyes, blazing with horrible fire, were the first object that met his gaze, Maltravers stood still, as if frozen into stone.

"Ha! ha!" laughed a shrill and shrieking voice, which contrasted dreadly with the accents of the soft Tuscan, in which the wild words were strung—"who comes here with garments dyed in blood? You cannot accuse me—for *my* blow drew no blood, it went straight to the heart—it tore no flesh by the way; we Italians poison our victims! Where art thou—where art thou, Maltravers? I am ready. Coward, you do not come! Oh, yes, yes, here you are;—the pistols—I will not fight so. I am a wild beast. Let us rend each other with our teeth and talons!"

Huddled up like a heap of confused and

jointless limbs in the furthest corner of the room, lay the wretch, a raving maniac;—two men keeping their firm gripe on him, which, ever and anon, with the mighty strength of madness, he shook off, to fall back senseless and exhausted; his strained and bloodshot eyes starting from their sockets, the slaver gathering round his lips, his raven hair standing on end, his delicate and symmetrical features distorted into a hideous and Gorgon aspect. It was, indeed, an appalling and sublime spectacle, full of an awful moral, the meeting of the foes! Here stood Maltravers, strong beyond the common strength of men, in health, power, conscious superiority, premeditated vengeance—wise, gifted; all his faculties ripe, developed, at his command;—the complete and all-armed man, prepared for defence and offence against every foe—a man who once roused in a righteous quarrel would not have quailed before an army; and there and thus was his dark and fierce purpose dashed from his soul, shivered into atoms at his feet. He felt the nothingness of man, and man's wrath—in the presence of the madman on whose head the thunderbolt of a greater curse than human anger ever breathes, had fallen. In his horrible affliction the Criminal triumphed over the Avenger!

"Yes! yes!" shouted Cesarini again; "they tell me she is dying: but he is by her side;—pluck him thence—he shall not touch her hand—she shall not bless him—she is mine—if I killed her, I have saved her from him—she is mine in death. Let me in, I say,—I will come in,—I will, I will see her, and strangle him at her feet." With that, by a tremendous effort, he tore himself from the clutch of his holders, and with a sudden and exultant bound sprang across the room, and stood face to face to Maltravers. The proud brave man turned pale and recoiled a step—"It is he! it is he!" shrieked the maniac, and he leaped like a tiger at the throat of his rival. Maltravers quickly seized his arm, and whirled him round. Cesarini fell heavily on the floor, mute, senseless, and in strong convulsions.

"Mysterious Providence!" murmured Maltravers, "thou hast justly rebuked the mortal for dreaming he might arrogate to himself thy privilege of vengeance. Forgive the sinner, O God, as I do—as thou teachest this stubborn heart to forgive—as she forgave who is now with thee, a blessed saint in heaven!"

When, some minutes afterwards, the doctor, who had been sent for, arrived, the head of the stricken patient lay on the lap of his foe, and it was the hand of Maltravers that wiped the froth from the white lips, and the voice of Maltravers that strove to soothe, and the tears of Maltravers that were falling on that fiery brow.

"Tend him, sir tend him as my brother," said Maltravers, hiding his face as he resigned the charge. "Let him have all that can alleviate and cure—remove him hence to some fitter abode—send for the best advice. Restore him, and—and——" He could say no more, but left the room abruptly.

It was afterwards ascertained that Cesarini had remained in the streets after his short interview with Ernest; that at length he had knocked at Lord Saxingham's door, just in the very hour when death had claimed its victim. He heard the announcement—he sought to force his way up-stairs—they thrust him from the house and nothing more of him was known till he arrived at his own door; an hour before Danvers and Maltravers came, in raging frenzy. Perhaps by one of the dim erratic gleams of light which always chequer the darkness of insanity, he retained some faint remembrance of his compact and assignation with Maltravers, which had happily guided his steps back to his abode.

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It was two months after this scene, a lovely Sabbath morning, in the earliest May, as Lumley, Lord Vargrave, sat alone by the window in his late uncle's villa, in his late uncle's easy chair—his eyes were resting musingly on the green lawn on which the windows opened, or rather on two forms that were seated upon a rustic bench in the middle of the sward. One was the widow in her weeds, the other was that fair and lovely child destined to be

the bride of the new lord. The hands of the mother and daughter were clasped each in each. There was sadness in the faces of both —deeper if more resigned on that of the elder, for the child sought to console her parent, and grief in childhood comes with a butterfly's wing.

Lumley gazed on them both, and on the child more earnestly.

"She is very lovely," he said; "she will be very rich. After all, I am not to be pitied. I am a peer, and I have enough to live upon at present. I am a rising man—our party want peers; and though I could not have had more than a subaltern's seat at the Treasury Board six months ago, when I was an active, zealous, able commoner, now that I am a lord, with what they call a stake in the country, I may open my mouth and—bless me! I know not how many windfalls may drop in! My uncle was wiser than I thought in wrestling for the peerage, which he won and I wear!—Then, by and by, just at the age when I want to marry and have an heir (and a pretty wife saves one a vast deal of trouble), 200,000*l.* and a young beauty! Come, come, I have strong cards in my hands if I play them tolerably. I must take care that she falls desperately in love with me. Leave me alone for that—I know the sex, and have never failed except in ——ah, that poor Florence! Well, it is no use regretting! Like thrifty artists, we must paint out the unmarketable picture, and call luckier creations to fill up the same canvas!"

Here the servant interrupted Lord Vargrave's meditation by bringing in the letters aud the newspapers which had just been forwarded from his town house. Lord Vargrave had spoken in the Lords on the previous Friday, and he wished to see what the Sunday newspapers said of his speech. So he took up one of the leading papers before he opened the letters. His eyes rested upon two paragraphs in close neighborhood with each other; the first ran thus·

"The celebrated Mr. Maltravers has abruptly resigned his seat for the —— of ——, and left town yesterday on an extended tour on the Continent. Speculation is busy on the causes of the singular and unexpected self-exile of a gentleman so distinguished in the very zenith of his career."

"So, he has given up the game!' muttered Lord Vargrave; "he was never a practical man —I am glad he is out of the way. But what's this about myself?"

"We hear that important changes are to take place in the government—it is said that ministers are at last alive to the necessity of strengthening themselves with new talent. Among other appointments confidently spoken of in the best-informed circles, we learn that Lord Vargrave is to have the place of ******. It will be a popular appointment. Lord Vargrave is not a holiday orator, a mere declamatory rhetorician—but a man of clear business-like views, and was highly thought of in the House of Commons. He has also the art of attaching his friends, and his frank, manly character cannot fail to have its due effect with the English public. In another column of our journal our readers will see a full report of his excellent maiden speech in the House of Lords, on Friday last: the sentiments there expressed do the highest honor to his lordship's patriotism and sagacity."

"Very well, very well indeed!" said Lumley, rubbing his hands; and, turning to his letters, his attention was drawn to one with an enormous seal, marked "Private and confidential." He knew before he opened it that it contained the offer of the appointment alluded to in the newspaper. He read, and rose exultantly; passing through the French windows, he joined Lady Vargrave and Evelyn on the lawn, and as he smiled on the mother and carressed the child, the scene and the group made a pleasant picture of English domestic happiness.

Here ends the First Portion of this work: it ends in the view that bounds us when we look on the practical world with the outward unspiritual eye—and see life that dissatisfies justice,—for life is so seen but in fragments. The influence of fate seems so small on the man who, in erring, but errs as the egoist, and shapes out of ill some use that can profit himself. But Fate hangs a shadow so vast on the heart that errs but in venturing abroad, and knows only in others the sources of sorrow and joy.

Go alone, O Maltravers, unfriended, remote

—thy present a waste, and thy past life a ruin, go forth to the Future!—Go, Ferrers, light cynic—with the crowd take thy way,—complacent, elated,—no cloud upon conscience, for thou seest but sunshine on fortune.—Go forth to the Future!

Human life is compared to the circle—Is the simile just? All lines that are drawn from the centre to touch the circumference, by the law of the circle, are equal. But the lines that are drawn from the heart of the man to the verge of his destiny—do they equal each other?—Alas! some seem so brief, and some lengthen on as for ever.

ALICE; OR, THE MYSTERIES.

NOTE.

ALTHOUGH it has been judged desirable to designate this Second Part of "Ernest Maltravers" by its original title of "Alice," yet, as it has been elsewhere stated, the two Parts are united by the same plot, and form but one entire whole. The more ingenious and attentive will perhaps perceive that under the outward story, which knits together the destinies of Alice and Maltravers, there is an interior philosophical design which explains the author's application of the word "Eleusinia," or "Mysteries," appended to the title. Thus regarded, Ernest Maltravers will appear to the reader as the type of Genius, or Intellectual Ambition, which, at the onset of its career, devotes itself with extravagant and often erring passion to Nature alone (typified by Alice). Maltravers is separated by action and the current of worldly life, from the simple and earlier form of Nature,—new objects successively attract, and for a short time absorb his devotion, but he has always a secret yearning to the first idol, and a repentant regret for his loss. Completing, however, his mental education in the actual world, and, though often led astray from the path, still earnestly fixing his eye upon the goal,—he is ultimately re-united to the one who had first smiled upon his youth, and ever (yet, unconsciously), influenced his after manhood. But this attachment is no longer erring, and the object of it has attained to a purer and higher state of being;—that is, GENIUS, if duly following its vocation, re-unites itself to the NATURE from which life and art had for a while distracted it; but to Nature in a higher and more spiritual form than that under which youth beholds it,—Nature elevated and idealized.

In tracing the progress and denouement of this conception the reader will be better enabled to judge both of the ethical intention of the author, and of the degree of success with which, as an artist, he has connected the inward story with the outer, and while faithful to his main typical purpose, left to the characters that illustrate it, the attributes of reality—the freedom and movement of living beings. So far as an author may presume to judge of his own writings—no narrative fiction by the same hand (with the exception of the poem of "King Arthur"), deserves to be classed before this work in such merit as may be thought to belong to harmony between a premeditated conception and the various incidents and agencies employed in the development of plot.

KNEBWORH, *Dec.* 14, 1851.

BOOK FIRST.

Σὲ τὰν ἀναύλοις ὑπὸ δενδροκόμοις
* * * ἀναβοάσω.—EURIP. *Hel.* 171

Thee, hid the bowering vales amidst, I call.

CHAPTER I.

"Who art thou, fair one, who usurp'st the place
Of Blanch, the lady of the matchless grace?"
—LAMB.

IT was towards the evening of a day in early April, that two ladies were seated by the open windows of a cottage in Devonshire. The lawn before them way gay with evergreens, relieved by the first few flowers and fresh turf of the reviving spring; and at a distance, through an opening amongst the trees, the sea, blue and tranquil, bounded the view, and contrasted the more confined and homelike features of the scene. It was a spot, remote, sequestered, shut out from the business and pleasures of the world;—as such it suited the tastes and character of the owner.

That owner was the younger of the ladies seated by the window. You would scarcely have guessed, from her appearance, that she was more than seven or eight-and-twenty, though she exceeded by four or five years that critical boundary in the life of beauty. Her form was slight and delicate in its proportions, nor was her countenance the less lovely, because, from its gentleness and repose, (not unmixed with a certain sadness), the coarse and the gay might have thought it wanting in expression. For there is a stillness in the aspect of those who have felt deeply, which deceives the common eye—as rivers are often alike tranquil and profound, in proportion as they are remote from the springs which agitated and swelled the commencement of their course, and by which their waters are still, though invisibly, supplied.

The elder lady, the guest of her companion was past seventy; her grey hair was drawn back from the forehead, and gathered under a stiff cap of quaker-like simplicity; while her dress, rich but plain, and of no very modern fashion, served to increase the venerable appearance of one who seemed not ashamed of years.

"My dear Mrs. Leslie," said the lady of the house, after a thoughtful pause in the conversation that had been carried on for the last hour; "it is very true; perhaps I was to blame in coming to this place; I ought not to have been so selfish."

"No, my dear friend," returned Mrs. Leslie, gently; "selfish is a word that can never be applied to you; you acted as became you—agreeably to your own instinctive sense of what is best, when at your age,—independent in fortune and rank, and still so lovely;—you resigned all that would have attracted others, and devoted yourself, in retirement, to a life of quiet and unknown benevolence. You are in your sphere in this village—humble though it be — consoling, relieving, healing the wretched, the destitute, the infirm; and teaching your Evelyn insensibly to imitate your modest and Christian virtues." The good old lady spoke warmly, and with tears in her eyes; her companion placed her hand in Mrs Leslie's.

"You cannot make me vain," said she, with a sweet and melancholy smile. "I remember what I was when you first gave shelter to the poor, desolate wanderer and her fatherless child; and I, who was then so poor and destitute, what should I be, if I was deaf to the

poverty and sorrows of others—others, too, who are better than I am? But now Evelyn, as you say, is growing up; the time approaches when she must decide on accepting or rejecting Lord Vagrave;—and yet in this village how can she compare him with others?—how can she form a choice? What you say is very true; and yet I did not think of it sufficiently. What shall I do? I am only anxious, dear girl, to act so as may be best for her own happiness."

"Of that I am sure," returned Mrs. Leslie; "and yet you know not how to advise. On one hand, so much is due to the wishes of your late husband, in every point of view, that if Lord Vagrave be worthy of Evelyn's esteem and affection, it would be most desirable that she should prefer him to all others. But if he be what I hear he is considered in the world,—an artful, scheming, almost heartless man, of ambitious and hard pursuits,—I tremble to think how completely the happiness of Evelyn's whole life may be thrown away. She certainly is not in love with him, and yet I fear she is one whose nature, is but too susceptible of affection. She ought now to see others,—to know her own mind, and not to be hurried, blindfolded and inexperienced, into a step that decides existence. This is a duty we owe to her—nay, even to the late Lord Vargrave, anxious as he was for the marriage. His aim was surely her happiness, and he would not have insisted upon means that time and circumstances might show to be contrary to the end he had in view."

"You are right," replied Lady Vargrave; "when my poor hushand lay on his bed of death, just before he summoned his nephew to receive his last blessing, he said to me, 'Providence can counteract all our schemes. If ever it should be for Evelyn's real happiness that my wish for her marriage with Lumley Ferrers should not be fulfilled, to you I must leave the right to decide on what I cannot foresee. All I ask is, that no obstacle shall be thrown in the way of my wish; and that the child shall be trained up to consider Lumley as her future husband.' Among his papers was a letter addressed to me to the same effect; and, indeed, in other respects, that letter left more to my judgment than I had any right to expect. Oh, I am often unhappy to think that he did not marry one who would have deserved his affection! and—but regret is useless now!"

"I wish you could really feel so," said Mrs. Leslie; "for regret of another kind still seems to haunt you; and I do not think you have yet forgotten your early sorrows."

"Ah! how can I?" said Lady Vargrave, with a quivering lip.

At that instant, a light shadow darkened the sunny lawn in front of the casements, and a sweet, gay, young voice was heard singing at a little distance:—a moment more, and a beautiful girl, in the first bloom of youth, bounded lightly along the grass, and halted opposite the friends.

It was a remarkable contrast—the repose and quiet of the two persons we have described—the age and grey heirs of one—the resigned and melancholy gentleness written on the features of the other—with the springing step, and laughing eyes, and radiant bloom of the new-comer! As she stood with the setting sun glowing full upon her rich fair hair, her happy countenance and elastic form—it was a vision almost too bright for this weary earth—a thing of light and bliss—that the joyous Greek might have placed among the forms of Heaven, and worshipped as an Aurora or a Hebe.

"Oh! how can you stay in-doors this beautiful evening? Come, dearest Mrs. Leslie; come, mother, dear mother, you know you promised you would—you said I was to call you—see, it will rain no more, and the shower has left the myrtles and the violet-bank so fresh."

"My dear Evelyn," said Mrs. Leslie, with a smile, "I am not so young as you."

"No; but you are just as gay when you are in good spirits—and who can be out of spirits in such weather? Let me call for your chair; let me wheel you—I am sure I can.—Down, Sultan; so you have found me out, have you, sir? Be quiet, sir—down!"

This last exhortation was addressed to a splendid dog of the Newfoundland breed, who now contrived wholly to occupy Evelyn's attention.

The two friends looked at this beautiful girl, as with all the grace of youth she shared while she rebuked the exuberant hilarity of her huge playmate; and the elder of the two seemed the most to sympathize with her mirth.

Both gazed with fond affection upon an object dear to both. But some memory or association touched Lady Vargrave, and she sighed as she gazed.

CHAPTER II.

"Is stormy life preferred to this serene?"
—YOUNG'S *Satires*.

AND the windows were closed in, and light had succeeded to evening, and the little party at the cottage were grouped together. Mrs. Leslie was quietly seated at her tambour-frame; —Lady Vargrave, leaning her cheek on her hand, seemed absorbed in a volume before her, but her eyes were not on the page;—Evelyn was busily employed in turning over the contents of a parcel of books and music, which had just been brought from the lodge, where the London coach had deposited it.

"Oh, dear mamma!" cried Evelyn, "I am so glad; there is something you will like—some of the poetry that touched you so much, set to music."

Evelyn brought the songs to her mother, who roused herself from her revery, and looked at them with interest.

"It is very strange," said she, "that I should be so affected by all that is written by this person: I, too," (she added, tenderly stroking down Evelyn's luxuriant tresses) "who am not so fond of reading as you are!"

"You are reading one of his books now," said Evelyn, glancing over the open page on the table. "Ah, that beautiful passage upon 'Our First Impressions.' Yet I do not like you, dear mother, to read his books; they always seem to make you sad."

"There is a charm to me in their thoughts, their manner of expression," said Lady Vargrave, "which sets me thinking, which reminds me of—of an early friend, whom I could fancy I hear talking while I read. It was so from the first time I opened by accident a book of his, years ago."

"Who is this author that pleases you so much?" asked Mrs. Leslie, with some surprise, for Lady Vargrave had usually little pleasure in reading even the greatest and most popular masterpieces of modern genius.

"Maltravers," answered Evelyn; "and I think I almost share my mother's enthusiasm."

"Maltravers!" repeated Mrs. Leslie. "He is, perhaps, a dangerous writer for one so young. At your age, dear girl, you have naturally romance and feeling enough of your own, without seeking them in books."

"But, dear madam," said Evelyn, standing up for her favorite, "his writings do not consist of romance and feeling only; they are not exaggerated, they are so simple—so truthful."

"Did you ever meet him?" asked Lady Vargrave.

"Yes," returned Mrs. Leslie, "once, when he was a gay, fair-haired boy. His father resided in the next county, and we met at a country-house. Mr. Maltravers himself has an estate near my daughter in B——shire, but he does not live on it; he has been some years abroad—a strange character!"

"Why does he write no more?" said Evelyn; "I have read his works so often, and know his poetry so well by heart, that I should look forward to something new from him as an event."

"I have heard, my dear, that he has withdrawn much from the world and its objects—that he has lived greatly in the East. The death of a lady to whom he was to have been married is said to have unsettled and changed his character. Since that event he has not returned to England. Lord Vargrave can tell you more of him than I."

"Lord Vargrave thinks of nothing that is not always before the world," said Evelyn.

"I am sure you wrong him," said Mrs. Leslie, looking up, and fixing her eyes on Evelyn's countenance; "for *you* are not before the world."

Evelyn slightly—very slightly—pouted her pretty lip, but made no answer. She took up the music, and, seating herself at the piano, practised the airs. Lady Vargrave listened with emotion; and as Evelyn, in a voice exquisitely sweet, though not powerful, sang the words, her mother turned away her face, and, half unconsciously, a few tears stole silently down her cheek.

When Evelyn ceased—herself affected, for the lines were impressed with a wild and melancholy depth of feeling—she came again to her mother's side, and, seeing her emotion,

kissed away the tears from the pensive eyes. Her own gaiety left her—she drew a stool to her mother's feet, and, nestling to her, and clasping her hand, did not leave that place till they retired to rest.

And the Lady blessed Evelyn, and felt that, if bereaved, she was not alone!

CHAPTER III.

"But come, thou Goddess, fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne!
* * * * *
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night."
—*Il Allegro.*

"But come, thou Goddess, sage and holy,
Come, divinest Melancholy!
* * * * *
There held in holy passions still,
Forget thyself to marble."—*Il Penseroso.*

THE early morning of early Spring—what associations of freshness and hope in that single sentence! And there—a little after sunrise—there was Evelyn, fresh and hopeful as the morning itself, bounding with the light step of a light heart over the lawn. Alone—alone! no governess, with a pinched nose and a sharp voice, to curb her graceful movements, and tell her how young ladies ought to walk. How silently Morning stole over the Earth! It was as if Youth had the day and the world to itself. The shutters of the cottage were still closed, and Evelyn cast a glance upward, to assure herself that her mother, who also rose betimes, was not yet stirring. So she tripped along, singing from very glee, to secure a companion, and let out Sultan; and, a few moments afterwards, they were scouring over the grass, and descending the rude steps that wound down the cliff to the smooth sea-sands. Evelyn was still a child at heart, yet somewhat more than a child in mind. In the majesty of

"That hollow, sounding, and mysterious main—"

in the silence broken but by the murmur of the billows—in the solitude relieved but by the boats of the early fishermen—she felt those deep and tranquilizing influences which belong to the Religion of Nature. Unconsciously to herself, her sweet face grew more thoughtful, and her step more slow. What a complex thing is education! How many circumstances, that have no connection with books and tutors, contribute to the rearing of the human mind!—the earth, and the sky, and the ocean, were among the teachers of Evelyn Cameron; and beneath her simplicity of thought was daily filled, from the urns of invisible spirits, the fountain of the poetry of feeling.

This was the hour when Evelyn most sensibly felt how little our real life is chronicled by external events—how much we live a second and a higher life in our meditations and dreams. Brought up not more by precept than example, in the faith which unites creature and Creator, this was the hour in which thought itself had something of the holiness of prayer; and if (turning from dreams divine to earthlier visions) this also was the hour in which the heart painted and peopled its own fairy land below—of the two ideal worlds that stretch beyond the inch of time on which we stand, Imagination is perhaps holier than Memory.

So now, as the day crept on, Evelyn returned in a more sober mood, and then she joined her mother and Mrs. Leslie at breakfast; and then the household cares—such as they were—devolved upon her, heiress though she was; and, that duty done, once more the straw hat and Sultan were in requisition; and, opening a little gate at the back of the cottage, she took the path along the village churchyard that led to the house of the old curate. The burial-ground itself was surrounded and shut in with a belt of trees. Save the small, time-discolored church, and the roofs of the cottage and the minister's house, no building—not even a cotter's hut—was visible there. Beneath a dark and single yew-tree, in the centre of the ground, was placed a rude seat; opposite to this seat was a grave, distinguished from the rest by a slight palisade. As the young Evelyn passed slowly by this spot, a glove on the long damp grass beside the yew-tree caught her eye. She took it up and sighed—it was her mother's. She sighed—for she thought of the soft melancholy on that mother's face which her caresses and her mirth never could wholly chase away. She wondered why that melancholy was so fixed a habit—for the young ever wonder why the experienced should be sad.

And now Evelyn had passed the churchyard

and was on the green turf before the minister's quaint, old-fashioned house.

The old man himself was at work in his garden; but he threw down his hoe as he saw Evelyn, and came cheerfully up to greet her.

It was easy to see how dear she was to him.

"So you are come for your daily lesson, my young pupil?"

"Yes; but Tasso can wait if the——"

"If the tutor wants to play truant no, my child;—aud, indeed, the lesson must be longer than usual to-day, for I fear I shall have to leave you to-morrow for some days."

"Leave us! why?—leave Brook-Green—impossible!"

"Not at all impossible; for we have now a new vicar, and I must turn courtier in my old age, and ask him to leave me with my flock. He is at Weymouth, and has written to me to visit him there. So, Miss Evelyn, I must give you a holiday task to learn while I am away."

Evelyn brushed the tears from her eyes—for when the heart is full of affection, the eyes easily run over—and clung mournfully to the old man, as she gave utterance to all her half-childish, half-womanly grief at the thought of parting so soon with him. And what, too, could her mother do without him; and why could he not write to the vicar, instead of going to him?

The curate, who was childless and a bachelor, was not insensible to the fondness of his beautiful pupil, and perhaps he himself was a little more *distrait* than usual that morning, or else Evelyn was peculiarly inattentive; for certain it is, that she reaped very little benefit from the lesson.

Yet he was an admirable teacher, that old man! Aware of Evelyn's quick, susceptible, and rather fanciful character of mind, he had sought less to curb, than to refine and elevate her imagination. Himself of no ordinary abilities, which leisure had allowed him to cultivate, his piety was too large and cheerful to exclude literature—Heaven's best gift—from the pale of religion. And under his care Evelyn's mind had been duly stored with the treasures of modern genius, and her judgment strengthened by the criticisms of a graceful and generous taste.

In that sequestered hamlet, the young heiress had been trained to adorn her future station; to appreciate the arts and elegancies that distinguished (no matter what the rank) the refined from the low, better than if she had been brought up under the hundred-handed Briareus of fashionable education. Lady Vargrave, indeed, like most persons of modest pretensions and imperfect cultivation, was rather inclined to overrate the advantages to be derived from book-knowledge, and she was never better pleased than when she saw Evelyn opening the monthly parcel from London, and delightedly poring over volumes which Lady Vargrave innocently believed to be reservoirs of inexhaustible wisdom.

But this day Evelyn would not read, and the golden verses of Tasso lost their music to her ear. So the curate gave up the lecture, and placed a little programme of studies to be conned during his absence, in her reluctant hand; and Sultan, who had been wistfully licking his paws for the last half-hour, sprung up and caracoled once more into the garden—and the old priest and the young woman left the works of man for those of Nature.

"Do not fear; I will take such care of your garden while you are away," said Evelyn; "and you must write and let us know what day you are to come back."

"My dear Evelyn, you are born to spoil every one—from Sultan to Aubrey."

"And to be spoiled too, don't forget that;" cried Evelyn, laughingly shaking back her ringlets. "And now, before you go, will you tell me, as you are so wise, what I can do to make—to make—my mother love me?"

Evelyn's voice faltered as she spoke the last words, and Aubrey looked surprised and moved.

"Your mother love you, my dear Evelyn! What do you mean—does she not love you?"

"Ah, not as I love her;—she is kind and gentle, I know, for she is so to all; but she does not confide in me—she does not trust me; she has some sorrow at heart which I am never allowed to learn and soothe. Why does she avoid all mention of her early days? she never talks to me as if *she*, too, had once a mother. Why am I never to speak of her first marriage—of my father? Why does she look reproachfully at me, and shun me—yes, shun me, for days together—if—if I attempt to draw her to the past? Is there a secret?—if so, am I not old enough to know it?"

Evelyn spoke quickly and nervously, and

with quivering lips. Aubrey took her hand, and pressing it, said, after a little pause.

"Evelyn, this is the first time you have ever thus spoken to me. Has anything chanced to arouse your—shall I call it curiosity, or shall I call it the mortified pride of affection?"

"And you, too, are harsh; you blame me! No, it is true that I have not thus spoken to you before; but I have long, long thought with grief that I was insufficient to my mother's happiness—I who love her so dearly. And now, since Mrs. Leslie has been here, I find her conversing with this comparative stranger, so much more confidentially than with me;—when I come in unexpectedly, they cease their conference, as if I were not worthy to share it; and—and oh, if I could but make you understand that all I desire is that my mother should love me, and know me, and trust me."

"Evelyn," said the curate, coldly, "you love your mother, and justly; a kinder and a gentler heart than hers does not beat in a human breast. Her first wish in life is for your happiness and welfare. You ask for confidence, but why not confide in her; why not believe her actuated by the best and the tenderest motives; why not leave it to her discretion to reveal to you any secret grief, if such there be, that preys upon her; why add to that grief by any selfish indulgence of over-susceptibility in yourself? My dear pupil, you are yet almost a child; and they who have sorrowed may well be reluctant to sadden with a melancholy confidence those to whom sorrow is yet unknown. This much, at least, I may tell you—for this much she does not seek to conceal—that Lady Vargrave was early inured to trials from which you, more happy, have been saved. She speaks not to you of her relations, for she has none left on earth. And after her marriage with your benefactor, Evelyn, perhaps it seemed to her a matter of principle to banish all vain regret, all remembrance, if possible, of an earlier tie."

"My poor, poor mother! Oh, yes, you are right; forgive me. She yet mourns, perhaps, my father, whom I never saw, whom I feel, as it were, tacitly forbid to name,—you did not know him?"

"Him!—whom?"

"My father, my mother's first husband?"

"No."

"But I am sure I could not have loved him so well as my benefactor, my real and second father, who is now dead and gone. Oh, how well I remember *him*—how fondly!" Here Evelyn stopped and burst into tears.

"You do right to remember him thus; to love and revere his memory—a father indeed he was to you. But now, Evelyn, my own dear child, hear me. Respect the silent heart of your mother: let her not think that her misfortunes, whatever they may be, can cast a shadow over you—you, her last hope and blessing. Rather than seek to open the old wounds, suffer them to heal, as they must, beneath the influences of religion and time; and wait the hour when without, perhaps, too keen a grief, your mother can go back with you into the past."

"I will,—I will. Oh, how wicked,—how ungracious I have been! it was but an excess of love, believe it, dear Mr. Aubrey, believe it."

"I do believe it, my poor Evelyn; and now I know that I may trust in you. Come, dry those bright eyes, or they will think I have been a hard task-master, and let us go to the cottage."

They walked slowly and silently across the humble garden into the churchyard, and there, by the old yew-tree, they saw Lady Vargrave. Evelyn, fearful that the traces of her tears were yet visible, drew back; and Aubrey, aware of what passed within her, said,—

"Shall I join your mother, and tell her of my approaching departure? and perhaps, in the meanwhile, yon will call at our poor pensioner's in the village—Dame Newman is so anxious to see you—we will join you there soon."

Evelyn smiled her thanks, and kissing her hand to her mother with seeming gaiety, turned back and passed through the glebe into the little village. Aubrey joined Lady Vargrave, and drew her arm in his.

Meanwhile Evelyn thoughtfully pursued her way. Her heart was full, and of self-reproach. Her mother had, then, known cause for sorrow; and, perhaps, her reserve was but occasioned by her reluctance to pain her child. Oh, how doubly anxious would Evelyn be hereafter to soothe, to comfort, to wean that dear mother from the past! Though in this girl's character there was something of the

impetuosity and thoughtlessness of her years, it was noble as well as soft; and now the woman's trustfulness conquered all the woman's curiosity.

She entered the cottage of the old bedridden crone whome Aubrey had referred to. It was as a gleam of sunshine, that sweet comforting face; and here, seated by the old woman's side, with the Book of the Poor upon her lap, Evelyn was found by Lady Vargrave. It was curious to observe the different impressions upon the cottagers made by the mother and daughter. Both were beloved with almost equal enthusiasm; but with the first the poor felt more at home. They could talk to her more at ease: she understood them so much more quickly; they had no need to beat about the bush to tell the little peevish complaints that they were half-ashamed to utter to Evelyn. What seemed so light to the young, cheerful beauty, the mother listened to with so grave and sweet a patience. When all went right, they rejoiced to see Evelyn; but in their little difficulties and sorrows, nobody was like "my good Lady!"

So Dame Newman, the moment she saw the pale countenance and graceful shape of Lady Vargrave at the threshold, uttered an exclamation of delight. Now she could let out all that she did not like to trouble the young lady with; now she could complain of east winds, and rheumatiz, and the parish officers, and the bad tea they sold poor people at Mr. Hart's shop, and the ungrateful grandson who was so well to do, and who forgot he had a grandmother alive!

CHAPTER IV.

"Towards the end of the week we received a card from the town ladies."—*Vicar of Wakefield.*

THE curate was gone, and the lessons suspended; otherwise—as like each to each as sunshine or cloud permitted—day followed day in the calm retreat of Brook-Green; when, one morning, Mrs. Leslie, with a letter in her hand, sought Lady Vargrave, who was busied in tending the flowers of a small conservatory which she had added to the cottage, when, from various motives, and one in especial powerful and mysterious, she exchanged for so sequestered a home the luxurious villa bequeathed to her by her husband.

To flowers—those charming children of Nature, in which our age can take the same tranquil pleasure as our youth—Lady Vargrave devoted much of her monotonous and unchequered time. She seemed to love them almost as living things; and her memory associated them with hours as bright and as fleeting as themselves.

"My dear friend," said Mrs. Leslie, "I have news for you. My daughter Mrs. Merton, who has been in Cornwall on a visit to her husband's mother, writes me word that she will visit us on her road home to the Rectory in B——shire. She will not put you much out of the way," added Mrs. Leslie, smiling, "for Mr. Merton will not accompany her; she only brings her daughter Caroline, a lively, handsome, intelligent girl, who will be enchanted with Evelyn. All you will regret is, that she comes to terminate my visit, and take me away with her. If you can forgive that offence, you will have nothing else to pardon."

Lady Vargrave replied with her usual simple kindness, but she was evidently nervous at the visit of a stranger (for she had never yet seen Mrs. Merton), and still more distressed at the thought of losing Mrs. Leslie a week or two sooner than had been anticipated. However, Mrs. Leslie hastened to reassure her. Mrs. Merton was so quiet and good-natured, the wife of a country clergyman with simple tastes; and, after all, Mrs. Leslie's visit might last as long, if Lady Vargrave would be contented to extend her hospitality to Mrs. Merton and Caroline.

When the visit was announced to Evelyn, her young heart was susceptible only of pleasure and curiosity. She had no friend of her own age; she was sure she should like the grandchild of her dear Mrs. Leslie.

Evelyn, who had learned betimes, from the affectionate solicitude of her nature, to relieve her mother of such few domestic cares as a home so quiet, with an establishment so regular, could afford, gaily busied herself in a thousand little preparations. She filled the rooms of the visitors with flowers (not dreaming that any one could fancy them unwholesome), and spread the tables with her own favorite books, and had the little cottage piano in her own dressing-room removed into Caro-

creatures, is still herself almost too inexperienced in the world to be a guide for one so young, placed in such peculiar circumstances, and of prospects so brilliant. Lady Vargrave, at heart, is a child still, and will be so, even when as old as I am."

"It is very true," said Mrs. Merton. "Don't you fear that the girls will catch cold? the dew is falling, and the grass must be wet."

"I have thought," continued Mrs. Leslie, without heeding the latter part of Mrs. Merton's speech, "that it would be a kind thing to invite Evelyn to stay with you a few months at the Rectory. To be sure, it is not like London; but you see a great deal of the world: the society at your house is well selected, and at times even brilliant;—she will meet young people of her own age, and young people fashion and form each other."

"I was thinking, myself, that I should like to invite her," said Mrs. Merton; "I will consult Caroline."

"Caroline, I am sure, would be delighted; the difficulty lies rather in Evelyn herself."

"You surprise me! she must be moped to death here."

"But will she leave her mother?"

"Why, Caroline often leaves me," said Mrs. Merton.

Mrs. Leslie was silent, and Evelyn and her new friend now joined the mother and daughter.

"I have been trying to persuade Evelyn to pay us a little visit," said Caroline; "she could accompany us so nicely: and if she is still strange with us—dear grandmamma goes too:—I am sure we can make her at home."

"How odd!" said Mrs. Merton; "we were just saying the same thing. My dear Miss Cameron, we should be so happy to have you."

"And I should be so happy to go, if mamma would but go too."

As she spoke, the moon, just risen, showed the form of Lady Vargrave slowly approaching the house. By the light, her features seemed more pale than usual; and her slight and delicate form, with its gliding motion and noiseless step, had in it something almost ethereal and unearthly.

Evelyn turned and saw her, and her heart smote her. Her mother—so wedded to the dear cottage—and had this gay stranger rendered that dear cottage less attractive—she who had said she could live and die in its humble precincts? Abruptly she left her new friend, hastened to her mother, and threw her arms fondly round her.

"You are pale, you have over-fatigued yourself:—where have you been?—why did you not take me with you?"

"Lady Vargrave pressed Evelyn's hand affectionately.

"You care for me too much," said she. "I am but a dull companion for you; I was so glad to see you happy with one better suited to your gay spirits. What can we do when she leaves us?"

"Ah, I want no companion but my own—own mother.—And have I not Sultan, too?" added Evelyn, smiling away the tear that had started to her eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

'Friend after friend departs,
Who hath not lost a friend?
There is no union here of hearts
That finds not here an end."
—J. MONTGOMERY.

THAT night, Mrs. Leslie sought Lady Vargrave in her own room. As she entered gently she observed that, late as the hour was, Lady Vargrave was stationed by the open window, and seemed intently gazing on the scene below. Mrs. Leslie reached her side unperceived. The moonlight was exceedingly bright, and just beyond the garden, from which it was separated but by a slight fence, lay the solitary churchyard of the hamlet, with the slender spire of the holy edifice rising high and tapering into the shining air. It was a calm and tranquillizing scene; and so intent was Lady Vargrave's abstracted gaze, that Mrs. Leslie was unwilling to disturb her revery.

At length Lady Vargrave turned; and there was that patient and pathetic resignation written in her countenance which belongs to those whom the world can deceive no more, and who have fixed their hearts in the life beyond.

"Mrs. Leslie, whatever she thought or felt, said nothing, except in kindly remonstrance on the indiscretion of braving the night air.

The window was closed: they sat down to confer.

Mrs. Leslie repeated the invitation given to Evelyn, and urged the advisability of accepting it. "It is cruel to separate you," said she; "I feel it acutely. Why not, then, come with Evelyn? You shake your head—why always avoid society?—So young yet, you give yourself too much to the past!"

Lady Vargrave, rose, and walked to a cabinet at the end of the room; she unlocked it, and beckoned to Mrs. Leslie to approach. In a drawer lay carefully folded articles of female dress—rude, homely, ragged—the dress of a peasant girl.

"Do these remind you of your first charity to me?" she said touchingly: "they tell me that I have nothing to do with the world in which you and yours, and Evelyn herself, should move."

"Too tender conscience!—your errors were but those of circumstance—of youth;—how have they been redeemed!—none even suspect them. Your past history is known but to the good old Aubrey and myself. No breath even of rumor tarnishes the name of Lady Vargrave."

"Mrs. Leslie," said Lady Vargrave, reclosing the cabinet, and again seating herself, "my world lies around me—I cannot quit it. If I were of use to Evelyn, then, indeed, I would sacrifice—brave all;—but I only cloud her spirits: I have no advice to give her—no instruction to bestow. When she was a child, I could watch over her; when she was sick, I could nurse her; but now she requires an adviser—a guide: and I feel too sensibly that this task is beyond my powers. I, a guide to youth and innocence!—*I!* No, I have nothing to offer her—dear child!—but my love and my prayers. Let your daughter take her, then—watch over her, guide, advise her. For me—unkind, ungrateful as it may seem—were she but happy, I could well bear to be alone!"

"But she—how will she, who loves you so, submit to this separation?"

"It will not be long, and," added Lady Vargrave, with a serious, yet sweet smile, "she had better be prepared for that separation which must come at last. As year by year I outlive my last hope, that of once more beholding *him*—I feel that life becomes feebler and feebler, and I look more on that quiet churchyard as a home to which I am soon returning. At all events, Evelyn will be called upon to form new ties, that must estrange her from me; let her wean herself from one so useless to her, to all the world,—now, and by degrees."

"Speak not thus," said Mrs. Leslie, strongly affected; "you have many years of happiness yet in store for you;—the more you recede from youth, the fairer life will become to you."

"God is good to me," said the lady raising her meek eyes; "and I have already found it so—I am contented."

CHAPTER IX.

"The greater part of them seemed to be charmed with his presence."

—MACKENZIE: *The Man of the World.*

IT was with the greatest difficulty that Evelyn could at last, be persuaded to consent to the separation from her mother: she wept bitterly at the thought. But Lady Vargrave, though touched, was firm, and her firmness was of that soft, imploring character, which Evelyn never could resist. The visit was to last some months, it is true; but she would return to the cottage; she would escape too—and this, perhaps, unconsciously reconciled her more than aught else—the periodical visit of Lord Vargrave. At the end of July, when the parliamentary session, at that unreformed era, usually expired, he always came to Brook-Green for a month. His last visits had been most unwelcome to Evelyn, and this next visit she dreaded more than she had any of the former ones. It is strange, the repugnance with which she regarded the suit of her affianced!—she whose heart was yet virgin—who had never seen any one who, in form, manner, and powers to please, could be compared to the gay Lord Vargrave. And yet a sense of honor—of what was due to her dead benefactor, her more than father—all combated that repugnance, and left her uncertain what course to pursue, uncalculating as to the future. In the happy elasticity of her spirits, and with a carelessness almost approaching to levity, which, to say truth, was natural to her, she did not often recall the solemn engage-

ment that must soon be ratified or annulled; but when that thought did occur, it saddened her for hours, and left her listless and despondent. The visit to Mrs. Merton was, then, finally arranged—the day of departure fixed—when, one morning, came the following letter from Lord Vargrave himself:—

"*To the Lady Vargrave, etc. etc.*

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I find that we have a week's holiday in our do-nothing Chamber, and the weather is so delightful, that I long to share its enjoyment with those I love best. You will, therefore, see me almost as soon as you receive this; that is, I shall be with you at dinner on the same day. What can I say to Evelyn? Will you, dearest Lady Vargrave, make her accept all the homage which, when uttered by me, she seems half inclined to reject?

"In haste, most affectionately yours,

"VARGRAVE!"

"*Hamilton Place, April 30th*, 18—."

This letter was by no means welcome, either to Mrs. Leslie or to Evelyn. The former feared that Lord Vargrave would disapprove of a visit, the real objects of which could scarcely be owned to him. The latter was reminded of all she desired to forget. But Lady Vargrave herself rather rejoiced at the thought of Lumley's arrival. Hitherto, in the spirit of her passive and gentle character, she had taken the engagement between Evelyn and Lord Vargrave almost as a matter of course. The will and wish of her late husband operated most powerfully on her mind; and while Evelyn was yet in childhood, Lumley's visits had ever been acceptable, and the playful girl liked the gay, good-humored Lord,—who brought her all sorts of presents, and appeared as fond of dogs as herself. But Evelyn's recent change of manner, her frequent fits of dejection and thought—once pointed out to Lady Vargrave by Mrs. Leslie—aroused all the affectionate and maternal anxiety of the former. She was resolved to watch, to examine, to scrutinize—not only Evelyn's reception of Vargrave, but, as far as she could, the manner and disposition of Vargrave himself. She felt how solemn a trust was the happiness of a whole life; and she had that romance of heart, learned from Nature, not in books, which made her believe that there could be no happiness in a marriage without love.

The whole family party were on the lawn, when, an hour earlier than he was expected, the travelling carriage of Lord Vargrave was whirled along the narrow sweep that conducted from the lodge to the house. Vargrave, as he saw the party, kissed his hand from the window; and, leaping from the carriage, when it stopped at the porch, hastened to meet his hostess.

"My dear Lady Vargrave, I am so glad to see you. You are looking charmingly; and Evelyn?—oh, there she is; the dear coquette, how lovely she is!—how she has improved! But who (sinking his voice), who are those ladies?"

"Guests of ours—Mrs. Leslie, whom you have often heard us speak of, but never met ——"

"Yes—and the others?"

"Her daughter and grandchild."

"I shall be delighted to know them."

A more popular manner than Lord Vargrave's it is impossible to conceive. Frank and prepossessing, even when the poor and reckless Mr. Ferrers, without rank or reputation—his smile—the tone of his voice—his familiar courtesy—apparently so inartificial and approaching almost to a boyish bluntness of good-humor—were irresistible in the rising statesman and favored courtier.

Mrs. Merton was enchanted with him; Caroline thought him at the first glance, the most fascinating person she had ever seen; even Mrs. Leslie, more grave, cautious, and penetrating, was almost equally pleased with the first impression: and it was not till, in his occasional silence, his features settled into their natural expression, that she fancied she detected, in the quick suspicious eye, and the close compression of the lips, the tokens of that wily, astute, and worldly character, which, in proportion as he had risen in his career, even his own party reluctantly and mysteriously assigned to one of their most prominent leaders.

When Vargrave took Evelyn's hand, and raised it with meaning gallantry to his lips, the girl first blushed deeply, and then turned pale as death; nor did the color thus chased away soon return to the transparent cheek. Not noticing signs which might bear a twofold interpretation, Lumley, who seemed in high spirits rattled away on a thousand matters—praising the view, the weather, the journey—throwing out a joke here, and a compliment

there, and completing his conquest over Mrs. Merton and Caroline.

"You have left London in the very height of its gaiety, Lord Vargrave," said Caroline, as they sat conversing after dinner.

"True, Miss Merton; but the country is in the height of its gaiety too."

"Are you so fond of the country, then?"

"By fits and starts — my passion for it comes in with the early strawberries, and goes out with the haut-boys—I lead so artificial a life; but then I hope it is an useful one. I want nothing but a home to make it a happy one."

"What is the latest news?—dear London! I am so sorry—grandmamma, Lady Elizabeth, is not going there this year; so I am compelled to rusticate. Is Lady Jane D—— to be married at last?"

"Commend me to a young lady's idea of news—always marriage! Lady Jane D——! yes, she is to be married, as you say—*at last!* While she was a beauty, our cold sex were shy of her; but she has now faded into plainness —the proper color for a wife."

"Complimentary!"

"Indeed it is—for you beautiful women we love too much for our own happiness—heigho! —and a prudent marriage means friendly indifference, not rapture and despair. But give me beauty and love; I never was prudent; it is not my weakness.

Though Caroline was his sole supporter in this dialogue, Lord Vargrave's eyes attempted to converse with Evelyn, who was unusually silent and abstracted. Suddenly Lord Vargrave seemed aware that he was scarcely general enough in his talk for his hearers. He addressed himself to Mrs. Leslie, and glided back as it were, into a former generation. He spoke of persons gone and things forgotten; he made the subject interesting even to the young, by a succession of various and sparkling anecdotes. No one could be more agreeable; even Evelyn now listened to him with pleasure; for to all women wit and intellect have their charm. But still there was a cold and sharp levity in the tone of the man of the world that prevented the charm sinking below the surface. To Mrs. Leslie he seemed unconsciously to betray a laxity of principle; to Evelyn, a want of sentiment and heart. Lady Vargrave, who did not understand a character of this description, listened attentively, and said to herself, "Evelyn may admire, but I fear she cannot love him." Still, time passed quickly in Lumley's presence, and Caroline thought she had never spent so pleasant an evening.

When Lord Vargrave retired to his room, he threw himself in his chair, and yawned with exceeding ferver. His sevant arranged his dressing-robe, and placed his port-folios and letter-boxes on the table.

"What o'clock is it?" said Lumley.

"Very early, my lord; only eleven."

"The devil!—the country air is wonderfully exhausting. I am very sleepy; you may go."

"This little girl," said Lumley, stretching himself, "is preternaturally shy — I must neglect her no longer—yet it is surely all safe. She has grown monstrous pretty; but the other girl is more amusing, more to my taste, and a much easier conquest, I fancy. Her great dark eyes seemed full of admiration for my lordship—sensible young woman!—she may be useful in piquing Evelyn."

CHAPTER X.

Julio. "Wilt thou have him?"
—*The Maid in the Mill.*

Lord Vargrave heard the next morning, with secret distaste and displeasure, of Evelyn's intended visit to the Mertons. He could scarcely make any open objection to it; but he did not refrain from many insinuations as to its impropriety.

"My dear friend," said he to Lady Vargrave, "it is scarcely right in you (pardon me for saying it) to commit Evelyn to the care of comparative strangers. Mrs. Leslie, indeed, you know; but Mrs. Merton, you allow, you have now seen for the first time—a most respectable person, doubtless; but still, recollect how young Evelyn is—how rich—what a prize to any younger sons in the Merton family (if such there be). Miss Merton herself is a shrewd, worldly girl; and if she were of our sex, would make a capital fortune-hunter. Don't think my fear is selfish; I do not speak for myself. If I were Evelyn's brother, I

should be yet more earnest in my remonstrance."

"But, Lord Vargrave, poor Evelyn is dull here; my spirits infect hers. She ought to mix more with those of her own age, to see more of the world before- -before——"

"Before her marriage with me. Forgive me, but is not that my affair? If I am contented, nay, charmed with her innocence—if I prefer it to all the arts which society could teach her,—surely you would be acquitted for leaving her in the beautiful simplicity that makes her chief fascination? She will see enough of the world as Lady Vargrave."

"But if she should resolve never to be Lady Vargrave——?"

Lumley started, bit his lip, and frowned. Lady Vargrave had never before seen on his countenance the dark expression it now wore. He recollected and recovered himself, as he observed her eye fixed upon him, and said, with a constrained smile—

"Can you anticipate an event so fatal to my happiness, so unforeseen, so opposed to all my poor uncle's wishes, as Evelyn's rejection of a suit pursued for years, and so solemnly sanctioned in her very childhood?"

"She must decide for herself," said Lady Vargrave. "Your uncle carefully distinguished between a wish and a command. Her heart is as yet untouched. If she can love you, may you deserve her affection."

"It shall be my study to do so. But why this departure from your roof, just when we ought to see most of each other? It cannot be that you would separate us?"

"I fear, Lord Vargrave, that if Evelyn were to remain here, she would decide against you. I fear if you press her now, such now may be her premature decision. Perhaps this arises from too fond an attachment for her home: perhaps even a short absence from her home —from me—may more reconcile her to a permanent separation."

Vargrave could say no more; for here they were joined by Caroline and Mrs. Merton. But his manner was changed, nor could he recover the gaiety of the previous night.

When, however, he found time for meditation, he contrived to reconcile himself to the intended visit. He felt that it was easy to secure the friendship of the whole of the Merton family; and that friendship might be more useful to him than the neutral part adopted by Lady Vargrave. He should of course, be invited to the Rectory; it was much nearer London than Lady Vargrave's cottage--he could more often escape from public cares to superintend his private interests. A country neighborhood, particularly at that season of the year, was not likely to abound in very dangerous rivals. Evelyn would, he saw, be surrounded by a *worldly* family, and he thought that an advantage; it might serve to dissipate Evelyn's romantic tendencies, and make her sensible of the pleasures of the London life, the official rank, the gay society that her union with him would offer as an equivalent for her fortune. In short, as was his wont, he strove to make the best of the new turn affairs had taken. Though guardian to Miss Cameron, and one of the trustees for the fortune she was to receive on attaining her majority, he had not the right to dictate as to her residence.

The late lord's will had expressly and pointedly corroborated the natural and lawful authority of Lady Vargrave in all matters connected with Evelyn's education and home. It may be as well, in this place, to add, that to Vargrave and the co-trustee, Mr. Gustavus Douce, a banker of repute and eminence, the testator left large discretionary powers as to the investment of the fortune He had stated it as his wish that from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and thirty thousand pounds should be invested in the purchase of a landed estate; but he had left it to the discretion of the trustees to increase that sum, even to the amount of the whole capital, should an estate of adequate importance be in the market; while the selection of time and purchase was unreservedly confined to the trustees. Vargrave had hitherto objected to every purchase in the market; not that he was insensible to the importance and consideration of landed property, but because, till he himself became the legal receiver of the income, he thought it less trouble to suffer the money to lie in the funds, than to be pestered with all the onerous details in the management of an estate that might never be his. He, however, with no less ardor than his deceased relative, looked forward to the time when the title of Vargrave should be based upon the venerable foundation of feudal manors and seignorial acres.

"Why did you not tell me Lord Vargrave was so charming?" said Caroline to Evelyn, as the two girls were sauntering, in familiar *tête-à-tête*, along the gardens. "You will be very happy with such a companion."

Evelyn made no answer for a few moments, and then, turning abruptly round to Caroline, and stopping short, she said, with a kind of tearful eagerness, "Dear Caroline, you are so wise, so kind too—advice me—tell me what is best. I am very unhappy."

Miss Merton was moved and surprised by Evelyn's earnestness.

"But what is it, my poor Evelyn," said she; "why are you unhappy?—you whose fate seems to me so enviable."

"I cannot love Lord Vargrave; I recoil from the idea of marrying him. Ought I not fairly to tell him so? Ought I not to say, that I cannot fulfil the wish that—oh, there's the thought which leaves me so irresolute!—his uncle bequeated to me—me who have no claim of relationship—the fortune that should have been Lord Vargrave's in the belief that my hand would restore it to him. It is almost a fraud to refuse him. Am I not to be pitied?"

"But why can you not love Lord Vargrave? If past the *première jeunesse*, he is still handsome: he is more than handsome: he has the air of rank—an eye that fascinates—a smile that wins—the manners that please—the abilities that command—the world! Handsome—clever—admired—distinguished—what can woman desire more in her lover—her husband? Have you ever formed some fancy, some ideal of the one you could love, and how does Lord Vargrave fall short of the vision?"

"Have I ever formed an ideal?—oh, yes!" said Evelyn, with a beautiful enthusiasm that lighted up her eyes, blushed in her cheek, and heaved her bosom beneath its robe; "something that in loving I could also revere: a mind that would elevate my own; a heart that could sympathize with my weakness, my follies, my romance, if you will; and in which I could treasure my whole soul."

"You paint a schoolmaster, not a lover!" said Caroline. "You do not care, then, whether this hero be handsome or young?"

"Oh, yes, he should be both," said Evelyn, innocently; "and yet," she added, after a pause, and with an infantine playfulness of manner and countenance, "I know you will laugh at me; but I think I could be in love with more than one at the same time!"

"A common case, but a rare confession!"

"Yes; for if I might ask for the youth and outward advantages that please the eye, I could also love with a yet deeper love that which would speak to my imagination—Intellect, Genius, Fame! Ah, these have an immortal youth and imperishable beauty of their own!"

"You are a very strange girl."

"But we are on a very strange subject—it is all an enigma!" said Evelyn, shaking her wise little head with a pretty gravity—half mock, half real. "Ah, if Lord Vargrave should love you—and you—oh, you *would* love him, and then I should be free, and so happy!"

They were then on the lawn in sight of the cottage windows, and Lumley, lifting his eyes from the newspaper, which had just arrived and been seized with all a politician's avidity, saw them in the distance. He threw down the paper, mused a moment or two, then took up his hat and joined them; but before he did so, he surveyed himself in the glass. "I think I look young enough, still," thought he.

"Two cherries on one stalk," said Lumley, gaily: "by the by, it is not a complimentary simile. What young lady would be like a cherry?—such an uninteresting, common, charity-boy-sort of fruit. For my part, I always associate cherries with the image of a young gentleman in corduroys and a skeleton jacket, with one pocket full of marbles, and the other full of worms for fishing, with three-half-pence in the left paw, and two cherries on one stalk (Helena and Hermia) in the right."

"How droll you are!" said Caroline, laughing.

"Much obliged to you, and don't envy your discrimination—'melancholy marks me for its own.' You ladies—ah, yours is the life for gay spirits and light hearts; to us are left business and politics—law, physic, and murder, by way of professions—abuse—nicknamed fame;—and the privilege of seeing how universal a thing—among the great and the wealthy—is that pleasant vice, beggary; which privilege is proudly entitled, 'patronage and power.' Are we the things to be gay—'droll,' as you say?—Oh, no, all our spirits are forced, believe me. Miss Cameron, did you ever

know that wretched species of hysterical affection called 'forced spirits?'—Never, I am sure; your ingenuous smile, your laughing eyes, are the index to a happy and a sanguine heart."

"And, what of me?" asked Caroline, quickly, and with a slight blush.

"You, Miss Merton?—ah, I have not yet read your character—a fair page, but an unknown letter. You however, have seen the world, and know that we must occasionally wear a mask." Lord Vargrave sighed as he spoke, and relapsed into sudden silence; then, looking up, his eyes encountered Caroline's, which were fixed upon him;—their gaze flattered him; Caroline turned away, and busied herself with a rose-bush. Lumley gathered one of the flowers, and presented it to her. Evelyn was a few steps in advance.

"There is no thorn in this rose," said he: "may the offering be an omen—you are now Evelyn's friend—oh, be mine; she is to be your guest Do not scorn to plead for me."

"Can *you* want a pleader?" said Caroline, with a slight tremor in her voice.

"Charming Miss Merton, love is diffident and fearful; but it must now find a voice, to which may Evelyn benignly listen. What I leave unsaid—would that my new friend's eloquence could supply."

He bowed slightly, and joined Evelyn. Caroline understood the hint, and returned alone and thoughtfully to the house.

"Miss Cameron—Evelyn—ah, still let me call you so—as in the happy and more familiar days of your childhood—I wish you could read my heart at this moment: you are about to leave your home—new scenes will surround—new faces smile on you;—dare I hope that I may still be remembered?"

He attempted to take her hand as he spoke; Evelyn withdrew it gently.

"Ah, my lord," said she, in a very low voice, "if remembrance were all that you asked of me——"

"It is all—favorable remembrance—remembrance of the love of the past—remembrance of the bond to come."

Evelyn shivered. "It is better to speak openly," said she: "let me throw myself on your generosity. I am not insensible to your brilliant qualities—to the honor of your attachment—but—but—as the time approaches in which you will call for my decision—let me now say, that I cannot feel for you—those—those sentiments, without which you could not desire our union—without which it were but a wrong to both of us to form it. Nay, listen to me—I grieve bitterly at the tenor of your too-generous uncle's will—can I not atone to you? Willingly would I sacrifice the fortune that, indeed, ought to be yours—accept it, and remain my friend."

"Cruel Evelyn! and can you suppose that it is your fortune I seek?—it is yourself. Heaven is my witness, that, had you no dowry but your hand and heart, it were treasure enough to me. You think you cannot love me. Evelyn, you do not yet know yourself. Alas! your retirement in this distant village—my own unceasing avocations, which chain me, like a slave, to the galley-oar of politics and power—have kept us separate. You do not know me. I am willing to hazard the experiment of that knowledge. To devote my life to you—to make you partaker of my ambition, my career—to raise you to the highest eminence in the Matron age of England—to transfer pride from myself to you—to love, and to honor, and to prize you—all this will be my boast; and all this will win love for me at last. Fear not, Evelyn,—fear not for your happiness; with me you shall know no sorrow. Affection at home—splendor abroad—await you. I have passed the rough and arduous part of my career—sunshine lies on the summit to which I climb. No station in England is too high for me to aspire to,—prospects, how bright with you! how dark without you! Ah, Evelyn! be this hand mine—the heart shall follow!"

Vargrave's words were artful and eloquent; the *words* were calculated to win their way—but the manner, the tone of voice, wanted earnestness and truth. This was his defect—this characterized all his attempts to seduce or to lead others, in public or in private life. He had no heart, no deep passion in what he undertook. He could impress you with the conviction of his ability, and leave the conviction imperfect, because he could not convince you that he was sincere. That best gift of mental power—*earnestness*—was wanting to him; and Lord Vargrave's deficiency of heart was the true cause why he was not a great man. Still, Evelyn was affected by his words;

she suffered the hand he now once more took to remain passively in his, and said, timidly—

"Why, with sentiments so generous and confiding—why do you love me, who cannot return your affection worthily? No, Lord Vargrave; there are many who must see you with juster eyes than mine—many fairer, and even wealthier. Indeed—indeed, it cannot be. Do not be offended, but think that the fortune left to me was on one condition I cannot, ought not to fulfil. Failing that condition, in equity and honor it reverts to you."

"Talk not thus, I implore you, Evelyn: do not imagine me the worldly calculator that my enemies deem me. But, to remove at once from your mind the possibility of such a compromise between your honor and repugnance—(repugnance! have I lived to say that word?)—know that your fortune is not at your own disposal. Save the small forfeit that awaits your non-compliance with my uncle's dying prayer, the whole is settled preemptorily on yourself and your children; it is entailed—you cannot alienate it. Thus, then, your generosity can never be evinced, but to him on whom you bestow your hand. Ah! let me recall that melancholy scene. Your benefactor on his death-bed—your mother kneeling by his side—your hands clasped in mine—and those lips, with their latest breath, uttering at once a blessing and a command!"

"Ah, cease—cease my lord!" said Evelyn, sobbing.

"No; bid me not cease before you tell me you will be mine. Beloved Evelyn! I may hope—you will not resolve against me."

"No," said Evelyn, raising her eyes and struggling for composure; "I feel too well what should be my duty; I will endeavor to perform it. Ask me no more now: I will struggle to answer you as you wish hereafter."

Lord Vargrave, resolved to push to the utmost the advantage he had gained, was about to reply—when he heard a step behind him; and turning round, quickly and discomposed, beheld a venerable form approaching them. The occasion was lost: Evelyn also turned; and seeing who was the intruder, sprang towards him almost with a cry of joy.

The new-comer was a man who had passed his seventieth year; but his old age was green, his step light, and on his healthful and benignant countenance time had left but few furrows. He was clothed in black; and his locks, which were white as snow, escaped from the broad hat, and almost touched his shoulders.

The old man smiled upon Evelyn, and kissed her forehead fondly. He then turned to Lord Vargrave, who, recovering his customary self-possesion, advanced to meet him with extended hand.

"My dear Mr. Aubrey, this is a welcome surprise. I heard you were not at the vicarage, or I would have called on you."

"Your lordship honors me," replied the curate. "For the first time for thirty years I have been thus long absent from my cure; but I am now returned, I hope, to end my days among my flock."

"And what," asked Vargrave—"what—if the question be not presumptuous—occasioned your unwilling absence?"

"My lord, replied the old man, with a gentle smile, "a new vicar has been appointed. I went to him, to proffer an humble prayer that I may remain amongst those whom I regarded as my children. I have buried one generation—I have married another—I have baptized a third."

"You should have had the vicarage itself—you should be better provided for, my dear Mr. Aubrey; I will speak to the Lord Chancellor."

Five times before had Lord Vargrave uttered the same promise,—and the curate smiled to hear the familiar words.

"The vicarage, my lord, is a family living, and is now vested in a young man who requires wealth more than I do. He has been kind to me, and re-established me among my flock: I would not leave them for a bishopric. My child," continued the curate, addressing Evelyn with great affection, "you are surely unwell—you are paler than when I left you."

Evelyn clung fondly to his arm, and smiled her old gay smile—as she replied to him. They took the way towards the house.

The curate remained with them for an hour. There was a mingled sweetness and dignity in his manner which had in it something of the primitive character we poetically ascribe to the pastors of the church. Lady Vargrave seemed to vie with Evelyn which should love him the most. When he retired to his home, which was not many yards distant from the

cottage, Evelyn, pleading a headache, sought her chamber, and Lumley, to soothe his mortification, turned to Caroline, who had seated herself by his side. Her conversation amused him, and her evident admiration flattered. While Lady Vargrave absented herself, in motherly anxiety, to attend on Evelyn—while Mrs. Leslie was occupied at her frame—and Mrs. Merton looked on, and talked indolently to the old lady of rheumatism and sermons, of children's complaints and servants' misdemeanors—the conversation between Lord Vargrave and Caroline, at first gay and animated, grew gradually more sentimental and subdued: their voices took a lower tone, and Caroline sometimes turned away her head and blushed.

CHAPTER XI.

"There stands the Messenger of Truth—there stands
The Legate of the skies."—COWPER.

FROM that night, Lumley found no opportunity for private conversation with Evelyn; she evidently shunned to meet with him alone; she was ever with her mother, or Mrs. Leslie, or the good curate, who spent much of his time at the cottage; for the old man had neither wife or children—he was alone at home—he had learned to make his home with the widow and her daughter. With them he was an object of the tenderest affection—of the deepest veneration. Their love delighted him, and he returned it with the fondness of a parent and the benevolence of a pastor. He was a rare character, that village priest!

Born of hnmble parentage, Edward Aubrey had early displayed abilities which attracted the notice of a wealthy proprietor, who was not displeased to affect the patron. Young Aubrey was sent to school, and thence to college as a sizar: he obtained several prizes, and took a high degree. Aubrey was not without the ambition and the passions of youth: he went into the world, ardent, inexperienced, and without a guide. He drew back before errors grew into crimes, or folly became a habit. It was nature and affection that reclaimed and saved him from either alternative—fame or ruin. His widowed mother was suddenly stricken with disease. Blind and bedridden, her whole dependence was on her only son. The affliction called forth a new character in Edward Aubrey. This mother had stripped herself of so many comforts to provide for him—he devoted his youth to her in return. She was now old and imbecile.

With the mingled selfishness and sentiment of age, she would not come to London—she would not move from the village where her husband lay buried—where her youth had been spent. In this village the able and ambitious young man buried his hopes and his talents; by degrees, the quiet and tranquillity of the country life became dear to him. As steps in a ladder, so piety leads to piety, and religion grew to him a habit. He took orders, and entered the church. A disappointment in love ensued—it left on his mind and heart a sober and resigned melancholy, which at length mellowed into content. His profession, and its sweet duties, became more and more dear to him; in the hopes of the next world he forgot the ambition of the present. He did not seek to shine—

"More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise."

His own birth made the poor his brothers, and their dispositions and wants familiar to him. His own early errors made him tolerant to the faults of others; few men are charitable who remember not that they have sinned. In our faults lie the germs of virtues. Thus gradually and serenely had worn away his life—obscure, but useful—calm, but active—a man whom "the great prizes" of the church might have rendered an amb tious schemer—to whom a modest confidence gave the true pastoral power—to conquer the world within himself, and to sympathize with the wants of others. Yes, he was a rare character, that village priest!

CHAPTER XII.

"Tout notre raisonnement se réduit à céder au sentiment. * "—PASCAL.

LORD VARGRAVE, who had no desire to remain alone with the widow when the guests were gone, arranged his departure for the

* All our reasoning reduces itself to yielding to sentiment.

same day as that fixed for Mrs. Merton's; and as their road lay together for several miles, it was settled that they should all dine at * * * whence Lord Vargrave would proceed to London. Failing to procure a second chance interview with Evelyn, and afraid to demand a formal one—for he felt the insecurity of the ground he stood on—Lord Vargrave, irritated and somewhat mortified, sought, as was his habit, whatever amusement was in his reach. In the conversation of Caroline Merton—shrewd, worldly, and ambitious—he found the sort of plaything that he desired. They were thrown much together; but to Vargrave, at least, there appeared no danger in the intercourse; and, perhaps, his chief object was to pique Evelyn, as well as to gratify his own spleen.

It was the evening before Evelyn's departure; the little party had been for the last hour dispersed: Mrs. Merton was in her own room, making to herself gratuitous and unnecessary occupation in seeing her woman *pack up*. It was just the kind of task that delighted her. To sit in a large chair, and see somebody else at work—to say, languidly, "Don't crumple that scarf, Jane—and where shall we put Miss Caroline's blue bonnet?"—gave her a very comfortable notion of her own importance and habits of business—a sort of title to be the superintendent of a family and the wife of a rector. Caroline had disappeared—so had Lord Vargrave; but the first was supposed to be with Evelyn: the second, employed in writing letters: at least, it was so when they had been last observed. Mrs. Leslie was alone in the drawing-room, and absorbed in anxious and benevolent thoughts on the critical situation of her young favorite, about to enter an age and a world, the perils of which Mrs. Leslie had not forgotten.

It was at this time that Evelyn, forgetful of Lord Vargrave and his suit—of every one—of every thing—but the grief of the approaching departure—found herself alone in a little arbor, that had been built upon the cliff to command the view of the sea below. That day she had been restless, perturbed; she had visited every spot consecrated by youthful recollections; she had clung with fond regret to every place in which she had held sweet converse with her mother. Of a disposition singularly warm and affectionate, she had often, in her secret heart, pined for a more yearning and enthusiastic love than it seemed in the subdued nature of Lady Vargrave to bestow. In the affection of the latter, gentle and never fluctuating as it was, there seemed to her a something wanting, which she could not define. She had watched that beloved face all the morning. She had hoped to see the tender eyes fixed upon her, and hear the meek voice exclaim. "I cannot part with my child?" All the gay pictures which the light-hearted Caroline drew of the scenes she was to enter, had vanished away—now that the hour approached, when her mother was to be left alone. Why was she to go? It seemed to her an unnecessary cruelty.

As she thus sate, she did not observe that Mr. Aubrey, who had seen her at a distance, was now bending his way to her; and not till he had entered the arbor, and taken her hand, did she waken from those reveries in which youth, the Dreamer, and the Desirer, so morbidly indulges.

"Tears, my child!" said the Curate. "Nay, be not ashamed of them; they become you in this hour. How we shall miss you!—and you, too, will not forget us!"

"Forget you! Ah no, indeed. But why should I leave you? Why will you not speak to my mother—implore her to let me remain? We were so happy till these strangers came. We did not think there was any other world—*here* there is world enough for me!"

"My poor Evelyn," said Mr. Aubrey, gently, "I have spoken to your mother, and to Mrs. Leslie; they have confided to me all the reasons for your departure, and I cannot but subscribe to their justice. You do not want many months of the age when you will be called upon to decide whether Lord Vargrave shall be your husband. Your mother shrinks from the responsibility of influencing your decision; and here, my child, inexperienced, and having seen so little of others, how can you know your own heart?"

"But, oh, Mr. Aubrey," said Evelyn, with an earnestness that overcame embarrassment, "have I a choice left to me? Can I be ungrateful—disobedient to him who was a father to me? Ought I not to sacrifice my own happiness? And how willingly would I do so, if my mother would smile on me approvingly!"

"My child," said the curate, gravely, "an old man is a bad judge of the affairs of youth; yet, in this matter, I think your duty plain. Do not resolutely set yourself against Lord Vargrave's claim—do not persuade yourself that you must be unhappy in a union with him. Compose your mind—think seriously upon the choice before you—refuse all decision at the present moment—wait until the appointed time arrives, or at least more nearly approaches. Meanwhile, I understand that Lord Vargrave is to be a frequent visitor at Mrs. Merton's—there you will see him with others—his character will show itself—study his principles — his disposition — examine whether he is one who you can esteem and render happy;—there may be a love without enthusiasm—and yet sufficient for domestic felicity, and for the employment of the affections. You will insensibly, too, learn from others parts of his character which he does not exhibit to us. If the result of time and examination be, that you can cheerfully obey the late lord's dying wish—unquestionably it will be the happier decision. If not—if you still shrink from vows at which your heart now rebels—as unquestionably you may, with an acquitted conscience, become free. The best of us are imperfect judges of the happiness of others. In the woe or weal of a whole life, we must decide for ourselves. Your benefactor could not mean you to be wretched; and if he now, with eyes purified from all worldly mists, look down upon you, his spirit will approve your choice. For when we quit the world, all worldly ambition dies with us. What now to the immortal soul can be the title and the rank which on earth, with the desires of earth, your benefactor hoped to secure to his adopted child? This is my advice. Look on the bright side of things, and wait calmly for the hour when Lord Vargrave can demand your decision."

The words of the priest, which well defined her duty, inexpressibly soothed and comforted Evelyn; and the advice upon other and higher matters, which the good man pressed upon a mind, so softened at that hour to receive religious impressions, was received with gratitude and respect. Subsequently their conversation fell upon Lady Vargrave—a theme dear to both of them. The old man was greatly touched by the poor girl's unselfish anxiety for her mother's comfort—by her fears that she might be missed, in those little attentions which filial love alone can render; he was almost yet more touched when, with a less disinterested feeling, Evelyn added, mournfully.

"Yet why, after all, should I fancy she will so miss me? Ah, though I will not *dare* complain of it, I feel still that she does not love me as I love her."

"Evelyn," said the curate, with mild reproach, "have I not said that your mother has known sorrow? and though sorrow does not annihiliate affection, it subdues its expression, and moderates its outward signs."

Evelyn sighed, and said no more.

As the good man and his young friend returned to the cottage, Lord Vargrave and Caroline approached them, emerging from an opposite part of the grounds. The former hastened to Evelyn with his usual gaiety and frank address: and there was so much charm in the manner of a man, whom *apparently* the world and its cares had never rendered artificial or reserved, that the curate himself was impressed by it. He thought that Evelyn might be happy with one amiable enough for a companion, and wise enough for a guide. But, old as he was, he had loved, and he knew that there are instincts in the heart which defy all our calculations.

While Lumley was conversing, the little gate that made the communication between the gardens and the neighboring churchyard, through which was the nearest access to the village, creaked on its hinges, and the quiet and solitary figure of Lady Vargrave threw its shadow over the grass.

CHAPTER XIII.

"And I can listen to thee yet,
Can lie upon the plain—
And listen till I do beget
That golden time again."
—WORDSWORTH.

It was past midnight—hostess and guests had retired to repose—when Lady Vargrave's door opened gently. The lady herself was kneeling at the foot of the bed: the moonlight came through the half-drawn curtains of the casement; and by its ray her pale, calm features looked paler, and yet more hushed.

Evelyn, for she was the intruder, paused at the threshold, till her mother rose from her devotions, and then she threw herself on Lady Vargrave's breast, sobbing, as if her heart would break—hers were the wild, generous, irresistible emotions of youth. Lady Vargrave, perhaps, had known them once; at least, she could sympathize with them now.

She strained her child to her bosom—she stroked back her hair, and kissed her fondly, and spoke to her soothingly.

"Mother," sobbed Evelyn, "I could not sleep—I could not rest. Bless me again—kiss me again;—tell me that you love me—you cannot love me as I do you;—but tell me that I am dear to you—tell me you will regret me—but not too much—tell me——" Here Evelyn paused and could say no more.

"My best, my kindest Evelyn," said Lady Vargrave, "there is nothing on earth I love like you. Do not fancy I am ungrateful."

"Why do you say ungrateful?—your own child—your only child!"—and Evelyn covered her mother's face and hands with passonate tears and kisses.

At that moment certain it is that Lady Vargrave's heart reproached her with not having, indeed, loved this sweet girl as she deserved. True, no mother was more mild, more attentive, more fostering, more anxious for a daughter's welfare;—but Evelyn was right!—the gushing fondness, the mysterious entering into every subtle thought and feeling, which should have characterized the love of such a mother to such a child, had been, to outward appearance, wanting. Even in this present parting, there had been a prudence, an exercise of reasoning, that savored more of duty than love. Lady Vargrave felt all this with remorse—she gave way to emotions new to her—at least to exhibit—she wept with Evelyn, and returned her caresses with almost equal fervor. Perhaps, too, she thought at that moment of what love that warm nature was susceptible; and she trembled for her future fate. It was as a full reconciliation—that mournful hour—between feelings on either side, which something mysterious seemed to have checked before:—and that last night the mother and the child did not separate—the same couch contained them; and, when worn out with some emotions which she could not reveal, Lady Vargrave fell into the sleep of exhaustion, Evelyn's arm was round her, and Evelyn's eyes watched her with pious and anxious love as the gray morning dawned.

She left her mother, still sleeping, when the sun rose, and went silently down into the dear room below, and again busied herself in a thousand little provident cares, which she wondered she had forgot before.

The carriages were at the door before the party had assembled at the melancholy breakfast-table. Lord Vargrave was the last to appear.

"I have been like all cowards," said he, seating himself;—"anxious to defer an evil as long as possible, a bad policy, for it increases the worst of all pains—that of suspense."

Mrs. Merton had undertaken the duties that appertain to the "hissing urn." "You prefer coffee, Lord Vargrave?—Caroline, my dear——"

Caroline passed the cup to Lord Vargrave, who looked at her hand as he took it—there was a ring on one of those slender fingers never observed there before. Their eyes met, and Caroline colored. Lord Vargrave turned to Evelyn, who, pale as death, but tearless and speechless, sate beside her mother; he attempted in vain to draw her into conversation. Evelyn, who desired to restrain her feelings, would not trust herself to speak.

Mrs. Merton, ever undisturbed and placid, continued to talk on: to offer congratulations on the weather—it was such a lovely day—and they should be off so early—it would be so well arranged—they should be in such good time to dine at * * *, and then go three stages after dinner—the moon would be up.

"But," said Lord Vargrave, "as I am to go with you as far as * * * where our roads separate, I hope I am not condemned to go alone, with my red box, two old newspapers, and the blue devils. Have pity on me."

"Perhaps you will take grandmamma, then?" whispered Caroline, archly.

Lumley shrugged his shoulders, and replied in the same tone, "Yes—provided you keep to the proverb, '*Les extrêmes se touchent*,' and the lovely grandchild accompany the venerable grandmamma."

"What would Evelyn say?" retorted Caroline.

Lumley sighed, and made no answer.

Mrs. Merton, who had hung fire while her daughter was carrying on this "aside," now put in.

"Suppose I and Caroline take your britzka, and you go in our old coach with Evelyn and Mrs. Leslie?"

Lumley looked delightedly at the speaker, and then glanced at Evelyn; but Mrs. Leslie said very gravely, "No, *we* shall feel too much in leaving this dear place, to be gay companions for Lord Vargrave. We shall all meet at dinner;—or" she added, after a pause, "if this be uncourteous to Lord Vargrave, suppose Evelyn and myself take his carriage, and he accompanies you?"

"Agreed," said Mrs. Merton, quietly; "and now, I will just go and see about the strawberry plants and slips—it was so kind in you, dear Lady Vargrave, to think of them."

An hour had elapsed — and Evelyn was gone! She had left her maiden home—she had wept her last farewell on her mother's bosom—the sound of the carriage-wheels had died away; but still Lady Vargrave lingered on the threshold—still she gazed on the spot where the last glimpse of Evelyn had been caught. A sense of dreariness and solitude passed into her soul:—the very sunlight—the spring—the songs of the birds—made loneliness more desolate.

Mechanically, at last, she moved away, and with slow steps and down-cast eyes passed through the favorite walk that led into the quiet burial-ground. The gate closed upon her—and now the lawn—the gardens—the haunts of Evelyn—were solitary as the desert itself;—but the daisy opened to the sun, and the bee murmured along the blossoms—not the less blithely for the absence of all human life. In the bosom of Nature there beats no heart for man!

BOOK SECOND.

—ἔτος ἦγθε, περιπλομένων ἐνιαυτῶν
Τῷ οἱ ἀπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ, οἰκόνδε νέεσθαι,
Εἰς Ἰθάκην, οὐδ' ἔνθα πεφυγμένος ἦεν ἀέθλων.
HOM. *Od.*, lib., i. l. 16.

The hour arrived—years having rolled away—
When his return the Gods no more delay.
Lo! Ithaca the Fates award; and there
New trials meet the Wanderer.——

CHAPTER I.

There is continual spring and harvest here—
Continual, both meeting at one time:
For both the boughs do laughing blossoms bear,
And with fresh colors deck the wanton prime;
And eke at once the heavy trees they climb,
Which seem to labor under their fruits' load."
—SPENSER: *The Garden of Adonis.*

* * * "Vis boni
In ipsâ inesset formâ." *—TERENT.

BEAUTY, thou art twice blessed; thou blessest the gazer and the possessor; often, at once the effect and the cause of goodness! A sweet disposition—a lovely soul—an affectionate nature—will speak in the eyes—the lips—the brow—and become the cause of beauty. On the other hand, they who have a gift that commands love, a key that opens all hearts, are ordinarily inclined to look with happy eyes upon the world—to be cheerful and serene—to hope and to confide. There is more wisdom than the vulgar dream of in our admiration of a fair face.

Evelyn Cameron was beautiful:—a beauty that came from the heart, and went to the heart—a beauty, the very spirit of which was love! Love smiled on her dimpled lips—it reposed on her open brow—it played in the profuse and careless ringlets of darkest yet sunniest auburn, which a breeze could lift from her delicate and virgin cheek. Love, in all its tenderness,—in all its kindness, its unsuspecting truth, Love colored every thought; murmured in her low melodious voice;—in all its symmetry and glorious womanhood, Love swelled the swan-like neck, and moulded the rounded limb.

She was just the kind of person that takes the judgment by storm: whether gay or grave, there was so charming and irresistible a grace about her. She seemed born, not only to captivate the giddy but to turn the heads of the sage. Roxalana was nothing to her. How, in the obscure hamlet of Brook Green, she had learned all the arts of pleasing it is impossible to say. In her arch smile, the pretty toss of her head, the half shyness, half freedom of her winning ways, it was as if Nature had made her to delight one heart, and torment all others.

Without being learned, the mind of Evelyn was cultivated and well informed. Her heart, perhaps, helped to instruct her understanding; for by a kind of intuition she could appreciate all that was beautiful and elevated. Her unvitiated and guileless taste had a logic of its own: no schoolman had ever a quicker penetration into truth—no critic ever more readily detected the meretricious and the false. The book that Evelyn could admire was sure to be stamped with the impress of the noble, the lovely, or the true!

But Evelyn had faults—the faults of her age; or, rather, she had tendencies that might conduce to error. She was of so generous a nature, that the very thought of sacrificing herself for another had a charm. She ever acted

* Even in beauty, there exists the power of virtue.

from impulse—impulses pure and good, but often rash and imprudent. She was yielding to weakness, persuaded into any thing—so sensitive, that even a cold look from one moderately liked cut her to the heart; and by the sympathy that accompanies sensitiveness, no pain to her was so great as the thought of giving pain to another. Hence is was that Vargrave might form reasonable hopes of his ultimate success. It was a dangerous constitution for happiness! How many chances must combine to preserve to the mid-day of characters like this, the sunshine of their dawn! The butterfly, that seems the child of the summer and the flowers, what wind will not chill its mirth—what touch will not brush away its hues?

CHAPTER II.

"These, on a general survey, are the modes
Of pulpit oratory, which agree
With no unletter'd audience."—POLWHELE.

MRS. LESLIE had returned from her visit to the Rectory to her own home, and Evelyn had now been some weeks at Mrs. Merton's. As was natural, she had grown in some measure reconciled and resigned to her change of abode. In fact, no sooner did she pass Mrs. Merton's threshold, than, for the first time, she was made aware of her consequence in life.

The Rev. Mr. Merton was a man of the nicest preception in all things appertaining to worldly consideration: the second son of a very wealthy baronet (who was the first commoner of his county), and of the daughter of a rich and highly-descended peer, Mr. Merton had been brought near enough to rank and power to appreciate all their advantages. In early life he had been something of a "tuft-hunter;" but as his understanding was good, and his passions not very strong, he had soon perceived that that vessel of clay, a young man with a moderate fortune, cannot long sail down the same stream with the metal vessels of rich earls and extravagant dandies. Besides, he was destined for the church,—because there was one of the finest livings in England in the family. He, therefore, took orders at six-and-twenty; married Mrs. Leslie's daughter, who had thirty thousand pounds; and settled at the Rectory of Merton, within a mile of the family seat. He became a very respectable and extremely popular man. He was singularly hospitable, and built a new wing—containing a large dining-room, and six capital bed rooms—to the rectory, which had now much more the appearance of a country villa than a country parsonage. His brother succeeding to the estates, and residing chiefly in the neighborhood, became, like his father before him, member for the county, and was one of the country gentlemen most looked up to in the House of Commons.

A sensible and frequent, though uncommonly prosy speaker, singularly independent (for he had a clear fourteen thousand pounds a-year, and did not desire office), and valuing himself on not being a party man, so that his vote on critical questions was often a matter of great doubt, and, therefore, of great moment—Sir John Merton gave considerable importance to the Reverend Charles Merton. The latter kept up all the more select of his old London acquaintances; and few country houses, at certain seasons of the year, were filled more aristocratically than the pleasant rectory-house. Mr. Merton, indeed, contrived to make the Hall a reservoir for the Parsonage, and periodically drafted off the *élite* of the visitors at the former, to spend a few days at the latter. This was the more easily done, as his brother was a widower, and his conversation was all of one sort—the state of the nation, and the agricultural interest. Mr. Merton was upon very friendly terms with his brother—looked after the property in the absence of Sir John—kept up the family interest—was an excellent electioneerer—a good speaker, at a pinch—an able magistrate—a man, in short, most useful in the county:—on the whole, he was more popular than his brother, and almost as much looked up to—perhaps, because he was much less ostentatious. He had very good taste, had the Reverend Charles Merton!—his table plentiful, but plain—his manners affable to the low, though agreeably sycophantic to the high and there was nothing about him that ever wounded self-love.

To add to the attractions of his house, his wife, simple and good tempered, could talk with any body, take off the bores, and leave people to be comfortable in their own way; while he had a large family of fine children of

all ages, that had long given easy and constant excuse, under the name of "little children's parties," for getting up an impromptu dance, or a gipsy dinner—enlivening the neighborhood, in short. Caroline was the eldest; then came a son, attached to a foreign ministry, and another, who, though only nineteen, was a private secretary to one of our Indian satraps. The acquaintance of these young gentlemen, thus engaged, it was therefore Evelyn's misfortune to lose the advantage of cultivating—a loss which both Mr. and Mrs. Merton assured her was very much to be regretted. But to make up to her for such a privation, there were two lovely little girls; one ten, and the other seven years old, who fell in love with Evelyn at first sight. Caroline was one of the beauties of the county,—clever and conversible—"drew young men," and set the fashion to young ladies, especially when she returned from spending the season with Lady Elizabeth.

It was a delightful family!

In person, Mr. Merton was of the middle height; fair, and inclined to stoutness, with small features, beautiful teeth, and great suavity of address. Mindful still of the time when he had been "about town," he was very particular in his dress: his black coat, neatly relieved in the evening by a white underwaistcoat, and a shirt-front admirably plaited, with plain studs of dark enamel—his well-cut trowsers, and elaborately-polished shoes—(he was good-humoredly vain of his feet and hands)—won for him the common praise of the dandies, (who occasionally honored him with a visit to shoot his game, and flirt with his daughter), "that old Merton was a most gentlemanlike fellow—so d——d neat for a parson!"

Such, mentally, morally, and physically, was the Reverend Charles Merton, rector of Merton, brother of Sir John, and possessor of an income, that, what with his rich living, his wife's fortune, and his own, which was not inconsiderable, amounted to between four and five thousand pounds a-year—which income, managed with judgment, as well as liberality, could not fail to secure to him all the good things of this world—the respect of his friends amongst the rest. Caroline was right when she told Evelyn that her papa was very different from a mere country parson.

Now this gentleman could not fail to see all the claims that Evelyn might fairly advance upon the esteem, nay, the veneration, of himself and family: a young beauty, with a fortune of about a quarter of a million, was a phenomenon that might fairly be called celestial. Her pretensions were enhanced by her engagement to Lord Vargrave—an engagement which might be broken; so that, as he interpreted it, the *worst* that could happen to the young lady was to marry an able and rising Minister of State—a peer of the realm; but she was perfectly free to marry a still greater man, if she could find him; and who knows but what perhaps the *attaché*, if he could get leave of absence?——Mr. Merton was too sensible to pursue that thought further for the present.

The good man was greatly shocked at the too-familiar manner in which Mrs. Merton spoke to this high-fated heiress—at Evelyn's travelling so far without her own maid—at her very primitive wardrobe—poor, ill-used child! Mr. Merton was a connoisseur in ladies' dress. It was quite painful to see that the unfortunate girl had been so neglected. Lady Vargrave must be a very strange person. He inquired compassionately, whether she was allowed any pocket money? and finding, to his relief, that in that respect Miss Cameron was munificently supplied, he suggested that a proper Abigail should be immediately engaged; that proper orders to Madame *Devy* should be immediately transmitted to London, with one of Evelyn's dresses, as a pattern for nothing but length and breadth. He almost stamped with vexation, when he heard that Evelyn had been placed in one of the neat little rooms generally appropriated to young lady visitors.

"She is quite contented, my dear Mr. Merton; she is so simple; she has not been brought up in the style you think for."

"Mrs. Merton," said the rector, with great solemnity, "Miss Cameron may know no better now; but what will she think of us hereafter? It is my maxim to recollect what people will be, and show them that respect which may leave pleasing impressions when they have it in their power to show us civility in return."

With many apologies, which quite overwhelmed poor Evelyn, she was transferred from the little chamber, with its French bed and bamboo-colored washhand-stand, to an

apartment with a buhl wardrobe and a four-post bed with green silk curtains, usually appropriated to the regular Christmas visitant, the Dowager Countess of Chipperton: a pretty morning-room communicated with the sleeping apartment, and thence a private staircase conducted into the gardens. The whole family were duly impressed and re-impressed with her importance. No queen could be more made of. Evelyn mistook it all for pure kindness, and returned the hospitality with an affection that extended to the whole family, but particularly to the two little girls, and a beautiful black spaniel. Her dresses came down from London—her Abigail arrived—the buhl wardrobe was duly filled—and Evelyn at last learned that it is a fine thing to be rich. An account of all these proceedings was forwarded to Lady Vargrave, in a long and most complacent letter, by the rector himself. The answer was short, but it contented the excellent clergyman; for it approved of all he had done, and begged that Miss Cameron might have everything that seemed proper to her station.

By the same post came two letters to Evelyn herself—one from Lady Vargrave, one from the curate. They transported her from the fine room and the buhl wardrobe, to the cottage and the lawn;—and the fine Abigail, when she came to dress her young lady's hair, found her weeping.

It was a matter of great regret to the rector that it was that time of year when—precisely because the country is most beautiful—every one worth knowing is in town. Still, however, some stray guests found their way to the rectory for a day or two, and still there were some aristocratic old families in the neighborhood, who never went up to London: so that two days in the week the rector's wine flowed, the whist-tables were set out, and the piano called into requisition.

Evelyn—the object of universal attention and admiration—was put at her ease by her station itself; for good manners come like an instinct to those on whom the world smiles. Insensibly she acquired self-possession and the smoothness of society; and if her childlike playfulness broke out from all conventional restraint, it only made more charming and brilliant the great heiress, whose delicate and fairy cast of beauty so well became her graceful *abandon* of manner, and who looked so unequivocally ladylike to the eyes that rested on Madame Devy's blondes and satins.

Caroline was not so gay as she had been at the cottage. Something seemed to weigh upon her spirits: she was often moody and thoughtful. She was the only one in the family not good-tempered; and her peevish replies to her parents, when no visitor imposed a check on the family circle, inconceivably pained Evelyn, and greatly contrasted the flow of spirits which distinguished her when she found somebody worth listening to. Still Evelyn—who, where she once liked, found it difficult to withdraw regard—sought to overlook Caroline's blemishes, and to persuade herself of a thousand good qualities below the surface; and her generous nature found constant opportunity of venting itself, in costly gifts, selected from the London parcels, with which the officious Mr. Merton relieved the Monotony of the rectory. These gifts Caroline could not refuse, without paining her young friend. She took them reluctantly, for to do her justice, Caroline, though ambitious, was not mean.

Thus time passed in the rectory, in gay variety and constant entertainment; and all things combined to spoil the heiress, if, indeed, goodness ever is spoiled by kindness and prosperity. Is it to the frost or to the sunshine that the flower opens its petals, or the fruit ripens from the blossom?

CHAPTER III.

"*Rod.* How sweet these solitary places are——
* * * * *
Ped. What strange musick
Was that we heard afar off?
Curio. We've told you what he is—what time we've sought him—
His nature and his name."
—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER: *The Pilgrim.*

ONE day, as the ladies were seated in Mrs. Merton's morning room, Evelyn, who had been stationed by the window hearing the little Cecilia go through the French verbs, and had just finished that agreeable task, exclaimed,

"Do tell me to whom that old house belongs—with the picturesque gable-end, and Gothic turrets—there, just peeping through the trees—I have always forgot to ask you."

"Oh, my dear Miss Cameron," said Mrs. Merton, "that is Burleigh—have you not been there? How stupid in Caroline not to show it to you. It is one of the lions of the place. It belongs to a man you have often heard of—Mr. Maltravers."

"Indeed!" cried Evelyn; and she gazed with new interest on the grey melancholy pile, as the sunshine brought it into strong contrast with the dark pines around it. "And Mr. Maltravers himself——?"

"Is still abroad, I believe; though I did hear, the other day, that he was shortly expected at Burleigh. It is a curious old place, though much neglected. I believe, indeed, it has not been furnished since the time of Charles the First.—(Cissy, my love, don't stoop so).—Very gloomy, in my opinion; and not any fine room in the house, except the library, which was once a chapel. However, people come miles to see it."

"Will you go there to-day?" said Caroline, languidly; "it is a very pleasant walk through the glebe-land and the wood—not above half-a-mile by the foot-path."

"I should like it so much."

"Yes," said Mrs. Merton, "and you had better go before he returns—he is so strange. He does not allow it to be seen when he is down. But, indeed, he has only been once at the old place since he was of age.—(Sophy, you will tear Miss Cameron's scarf to pieces; do be quiet, child).—That was before he was a great man—he was then very odd—saw no society—only dined once with us—though Mr. Merton paid him every attention. They show the room in which he wrote his books."

"I remember him very well, though I was then but a child," said Caroline,—"a handsome, thoughtful face."

"Did you think so, my dear? fine eyes and teeth, certainly, and a commanding figure—but nothing more."

"Well," said Caroline, "if you like to go, Evelyn, I am at your service."

"And—I—Evy, dear—I—may go," said Cecilia, clinging to Evelyn.

"And me, too," lisped Sophia—the youngest hope—"there's such a pretty peacock."

"Oh, yes—they may go, Mrs. Merton, we'll take such care of them."

"Very well, my dear—Miss Cameron quite spoils you."

Evelyn tripped away to put on her bonnet—and the children ran after her, clapping their hands, they could not bear to lose sight of her for a moment."

"Caroline," said Mrs. Merton, affectionately, "are you not well?—you have seemed pale lately, and not in your usual spirits."

"Oh, yes, I'm well enough," answered Caroline, rather peevishly; "but this place is so dull now—very provoking that Lady Elizabeth does not go to London this year."

"My dear, it will be gayer, I hope, in July, when the races at Knaresdean begin; and Lord Vargrave has promised to come."

"Has Lord Vargrave written to you lately?"

"No, my dear."

"Very odd."

"Does Evelyn ever talk of him?"

"Not much," said Caroline, rising and quitting the room.

It was a most cheerful, exhilarating day; the close of sweet May; the hedges were white with blossoms, a light breeze rustled the young leaves, the butterflies had ventured forth, and the children chased them over the grass, as Evelyn and Caroline, who walked much too slow for her companion (Evelyn longed to run), followed them soberly towards Burleigh.

They passed the glebe-fields; and a little bridge, thrown over a brawling rivulet, conducted them into a wood.

"This stream," said Caroline, "forms the boundary between my uncle's estates and those of Mr. Maltravers. It must be very unpleasant to so proud a man as Mr. Maltravers is said to be, to have the land of another proprietor so near his house. He could hear my uncle's gun from his very drawing-room. However, Sir John takes care not to molest him. On the other side, the Burleigh estates extend for some miles; indeed, Mr. Maltravers is the next great proprietor to my uncle in this part of the county. Very strange that he does not marry! There, now you can see the house."

The mansion lay somewhat low, with hanging woods in the rear; and the old-fashioned fish-ponds gleaming in the sunshine, and overshadowed by gigantic trees, increased the venerable stillness of its aspect. Ivy and innumerable creepers covered one side of the house; and long weeds cumbered the deserted road.

"It was sadly neglected," said Caroline; "and was so, even in the last owner's life. Mr. Maltravers inherits the place from his mother's uncle. We may as well enter the house by the private way. The front entrance is kept locked up."

Winding by a path that conducted into a flower-garden, divided from the park by a ha-ha, over which a plank and a small gate, rusting off its hinges, were placed, Caroline led the way towards the building. At this point of view, it presented a large bay-window, that by a flight of four steps, led into the garden. On one side rose a square, narrow turret, surmounted by a gilt dome and quaint weather-cock, below the architrave of which was a sun-dial, set in the stone work; and another dial stood in the garden, with the common and beautiful motto—

"*Non numero horas, nisi serenas!*" *

On the other side of the bay-window, a huge buttress cast its mass of shadow. There was something in the appearance of the whole place that invited to contemplation and repose—something almost monastic. The gaiety of the teeming spring-time could not divest the spot of a certain sadness, not displeasing, however, whether to the young, to whom there is a luxury in the vague sentiment of melancholy, or to those who, having known real griefs, seek for an anodyne in meditation and memory. The low lead-colored door, set deep in the turret, was locked, and the bell beside it broken. Caroline turned impatiently away. "We must go round to the other side," said she, "and try to make the deaf old man hear us."

"Oh, Carry!" cried Cecilia, "the great window is open;" and she ran up the steps.

"That is lucky," said Caroline; and the rest followed Cecilia.

Evelyn now stood within the library of which Mrs. Merton had spoken. It was a large room, about fifty feet in length, and proportionably wide; somewhat dark, for the light came only from the one large window through which they entered; and though the window rose to the cornice of the ceiling, and took up one side of the apart, the daylight was subdued by the heaviness of the stonework in which the narrow panes were set, and by the glass stained with armorial bearings in the upper part of the casement. The bookcases, too, were of the dark oak which so much absorbs the light; and the gilding, formerly meant to relieve them, was discolored by time.

The room was almost disproportionably lofty; the ceiling, elaborately coved, and richly carved with grotesque masks, preserved the Gothic character of the age in which it had been devoted to a religious purpose. Two fireplaces, with high chimney-pieces of oak, in which were inserted two portraits, broke the symmetry of the tall bookcases. In one of these fireplaces were half-burnt logs; and a huge arm-chair, with a small reading-desk beside it, seemed to bespeak the recent occupation of the room. On the fourth side, opposite the window, the wall was covered with faded tapestry, representing the meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba; the arras was nailed over doors, on either hand; the chinks between the door and the wall serving, in one instance, to cut off in the middle his wise majesty, who was making a low bow; while in the other it took the ground from under the wanton queen, just as she was descending from her chariot.

Near the window stood a grand piano, the only modern article in the room, save one of the portraits, presently to be described. On all this Evelyn gazed silently and devoutly: she had naturally that reverence for genius which is common to the enthusiastic and young; and there is, even to the dullest, a certain interest in the homes of those who have implanted within us a new thought. But here there was, she imagined, a rare and singular harmony between the place and the mental characteristics of the owner. She fancied she now better understood the shadowy and metaphysical repose of thought that had distinguished the earlier writings of Maltravers —the writings composed or planned in this still retreat.

But what particularly caught her attention was one of the two portraits that adorned the mantelpieces. The further one was attired in the rich and fanciful armor of the time of Elizabeth; the head bare, the helmet on a table on which the hand rested. It was a handsome and striking countenance; and an

* I number not the hours unless sunny.

inscription announced it to be a Digby, an ancestor of Maltravers.

But the other was a beautiful girl of about eighteen, in the now almost antiquated dress of forty years ago. The features were delicate, but the colors somewhat faded, and there was something mournful in the expression. A silk curtain drawn on one side, seemed to denote how carefully it was prized by the possessor.

Evelyn turned for explanation to her cicerone.

"This is the second time I have seen that picture," said Caroline; "for it is only by great entreaty, and as a mysterious favor, that the old housekeeper draws aside the veil. Some touch of sentiment in Maltravers makes him regard it as sacred. It is the picture of his mother before she married; she died in giving him birth."

Evelyn sighed; how well she understood the sentiment which seemed to Caroline so eccentric! The countenance fascinated her; the eye seemed to follow her as she turned.

"As a proper pendant to this picture," said Caroline, "he ought to have dismissed the effigies of you warlike gentleman, and replaced it by one of poor Lady Florence Lascelles, for whose loss he is said to have quitted his country; but, perhaps, it was the loss of her fortune."

"How can you say so?—fie!" cried Evelyn, with a burst of generous indignation.

"Ah, my dear, you heiresses have a fellow-feeling with each other! Nevertheless, clever men are less sentimental than we deem them—heigho!—this quiet room gives me the spleen, I fancy."

"Dearest Evy," whispered Cecilia, "I think you have a look of that pretty picture, only you are much prettier. Do take off your bonnet; your hair just falls down like hers."

Evelyn shook her head gravely; but the spoiled child hastily untied the ribands, and snatched away the hat, and Evelyn's sunny ringlets fell down in beautiful disorder. There was no resemblance between Evelyn and the portrait, except in the color of the hair, and the careless fashion it now by chance assumed. Yet Evelyn was pleased to think that a likeness did exist, though Caroline declared it was a most unflattering compliment.

"I don't wonder," said the latter, changing the theme, "I don't wonder Mr. Maltravers lives so little in this 'Castle Dull;' yet it might be much improved. French windows and plate-glass, for instance; and if those lumbering bookshelves and horrid old chimneypieces were removed, and the ceiling painted white and gold, like that in my uncle's saloon, and a rich, lively paper, instead of the tapestry, it would really make a very fine ball-room."

"Let us have a dance here now," cried Cecilia. "Come, stand up, Sophy;" and the children began to practise a waltz step, tumbling over each other and laughing in full glee.

"Hush, hush!" said Evelyn, softly. She had never before checked the children's mirth, and she could not tell why she did so now.

"I suppose the old butler has been entertaining the bailiff here," said Caroline, pointing to the remains of the fire.

"And is this the room he chiefly inhabited—the room that you say they show as his?"

"No; that tapestry door to the right leads into a little study where he wrote." So saying, Caroline tried to open the door, but it was locked from within. She then opened the other door, which showed a long wainscoted passage, hung with rusty pikes, and a few breastplates of the time of the Parliamentary Wars. "This leads to the main body of the house," said Caroline, "from which the room we are now in and the little study are completely detached, having, as you know, been the chapel in popish times. I have heard that Sir Kenelm Digby, an ancestral connection of the present owner, first converted them into their present use; and, in return, built the village church on the other side of the park."

Sir Kenelm Digby, the old cavalier-philosopher!—a new name of interest to consecrate the place! Evelyn could have lingered all day in the room; and, perhaps, as an excuse for a longer sojourn, hastened to the piano—it was open—she ran her fairy fingers over the keys, and the sound, from the untuned and neglected instrument, thrilled wild and spiritlike through the melancholy chamber.

"Oh! do sing us something, Evy," cried Cecilia, running up to, and drawing a chair to, the instrument.

"Do, Evelyn," said Caroline, languidly, "it will serve to bring one of the servants to us, and save us a journey to the offices."

It was just what Evelyn wished. Some

verses, which her mother especially loved; verses written by Maltravers upon returning, after absence, to his own home, had rushed into her mind as she had touched the keys. They were appropriate to the place, and had been beautifully set to music. So the children hushed themselves, and nestled at her feet; and, after a little prelude, keeping the accompaniment under, that the spoiled instrument might not mar the sweet words, and sweeter voice, she began the song.

Meanwhile, in the adjoining room, the little study which Caroline had spoken of, sate the owner of the house!—He had returned suddenly and unexpectedly the previous night. The old steward was in attendance at the moment, full of apologies, congratulations, and gossip; and Maltravers, grown a stern and haughty man, was already impatiently turning away, when he heard the sudden sound of the children's laughter and loud voices in the room beyond. Maltravers frowned.

"What impertinence is this?" said he, in a tone that, though very calm, made the steward quake in his shoes.

"I don't know, really, your honor; there be so many grand folks come to see the house in the fine weather, they——"

"And you permit your master's house to be a raree-show?—you do well, sir."

"If your honor were more amongst us, there might be more discipline like," said the steward stoutly; "but no one in my time has cared so little for the old place as those it belongs to."

"Fewer words to me, sir," said Maltravers, haughtily; "and now go and inform those people that I am returned, and wish for no guests but those I invite myself."

"Sir!"

"Do you not hear me? Say, that if it so please them, these old ruins are my property, and are not to be jobbed out to the insolence of public curiosity. Go, sir,"

"But—I beg pardon, your honor—if they be great folks?——"

"Great folks!—great! Ay, there it is. Why, if they be great folks, they have great houses of their own, Mr. Justis."

The steward stared. "Perhaps your honor," he put in, deprecatingly, "they be Mr. Merton's family they come very often when the London gentlemen are with them."

"Merton!—oh, the cringing parson. Harkye! one word more with me, sir, and you quit my service to-morrow."

Mr. Justis lifted his eyes and hands to heaven: but there was something in his master's voice and look which checked reply, and he turned slowly to the door—when a voice of such heavenly sweetness, was heard without, that it arrested his own step, and made the stern Maltravers start in his seat. He held up his hand to the steward to delay his errand, and listened, charmed and spell-bound. His own words came on his ear—words long unfamiliar to him, and at first but imperfectly remembered—words connected with the early and virgin years of poetry and aspiration—words that were as the ghosts of thoughts now far too gentle for his altered soul. He bowed down his head, and the dark shade left his brow.

The song ceased, Maltravers moved with a sigh, and his eyes rested on the form of the steward with his hand on the door.

"Shall I give your honor's message?" said Mr. Justis, gravely.

"No—take care for the future: leave me now."

Mr. Justis made one leg, and then, well pleased, took to both.

"Well," thought he, as he departed, "how foreign parts do spoil a gentleman!—so mild as he was once! I must botch up the accounts, I see—the squire has grown sharp."

As Evelyn concluded her song, she—whose charm in singing was that she sang from the heart—was so touched by the melancholy music of the air and words, that her voice faltered, and the last line died inaudibly on her lips.

The children sprang up and kissed her.

"Oh," cried Cecillia, "there is the beautiful peacock!" And there, indeed, on the steps without perhaps attracted by the music, stood the picturesque bird. The children ran out to greet their old favorite, who was extremely tame; and presently Cecillia returned.

"Oh, Carry! do see what beantiful horses are coming up the park!"

Caroline, who was a good rider, and fond of horses, and whose curiosity was always aroused by things connected with show and station—suffered the little girl to draw her into the garden. Two grooms, each mounted on a

horse of the pure Arabian breed, and each leading another, swathed and bandaged, were riding slowly up the road; and Caroline was so attracted by the novel appearance of the animals in a place so deserted, that she followed the children towards them, to learn who could possibly be their enviable owner. Evelyn, forgotten for the moment, remained alone. She was pleased at being so, and once more turned to the picture which had so attracted her before. The mild eyes fixed on her, with an expression that recalled to her mind her own mother.

"And," thought she, as she gazed, "this fair creature did not live to know the fame of her son—to rejoice in his success—or to soothe his grief. And he, that son—a disappointed and solitary exile in distant lands, while strangers stand within his deserted hall!"

The images she had conjured up moved and absorbed her, and she continued to stand before the picture, gazing upward with moistened eyes. It was a beautiful vision as she thus stood, with her delicate bloom, her luxuriant hair (for the hat was not yet replaced) —her elastic form, so full of youth, and health, and hope—the living form beside the faded canvass of the dead—once youthful, tender, lovely as herself! Evelyn turned away with a sigh—the sigh was re-echoed yet more deeply. She started: the door that led to the study was opened, and in the aperture was the figure of a man, in the prime of life. His hair, still luxuriant as in his earliest youth, though darkened by the suns of the East, curled over a forehead of majestic expanse. The high and proud features, that well became a stature above the ordinary standard—the pale but bronzed complexion—the large eyes of deepest blue, shaded by dark brows and lashes—and, more than all, that expression at once of passion and repose which characterizes the old Italian portraits, and seems to denote the inscrutable power that experience imparts to intellect—constituted an *ensemble* which, if not faultlessly handsome, was eminently striking, and formed at once to interest and command. It was a face, once seen, never to be forgotten; it was a face that had long, half unconsciously, haunted Evelyn's young dreams; it was a face she had seen before, though then younger, and milder, and fairer, it wore a different aspect.

Evelyn stood rooted to the spot, feeling herself blush to her very temples—an enchanting picture of bashful confusion, and innocent alarm.

"Do not let me regret my return," said the stranger, approaching after a short pause, and with much gentleness in his voice and smile, "and think that the owner is doomed to scare away the fair spirits that haunted the spot in his absence."

"The owner!" repeated Evelyn, almost inaudibly, and an increased embarrassment; "are you then the—the?"——

"Yes," courteously interrupted the stranger, seeing her confusion; "my name is Maltravers; and I am to blame for not having informed you of my sudden return, or for now trespassing on your presence. But you see my excuse;" and he pointed to the instrument. "You have the magic that draws even the serpent from his hole. But you are not alone?"

"Oh, no! no, indeed! Miss Merton is with me. I know not where she is gone. I will seek her."

"Miss Merton! You are not then one of that family?"

"No, only a guest. I will find her—she must apologize for us. We were not aware that you were here—indeed we were not."

"That is a cruel excuse," said Maltravers, smiling at her eagerness: and the smile and the look reminded her yet more forcibly of the time when he had carried her in his arms, and soothed her suffering, and praised her courage, and pressed the kiss almost of a lover on her hand. At that thought she blushed yet more deeply, and yet more eagerly turned to escape.

Maltravers did not seek to detain her, but silently followed her steps. She had scarcely gained the window, before little Cecilia scampered in, crying—

"Only think! Mr. Maltravers has come back and brought such beautiful horses!"

Cecilia stopped abruptly, as she caught sight of the stranger; and the next moment Caroline herself appeared. Her worldly experience and quick sense saw immediately what had chanced: and she hastened to apologize to Maltravers, and congratulate him on his return, with an ease that astonished poor Evelyn, and by no means seemed appreciated

by Maltravers himself. He replied with brief and haughty courtesy.

"My father," continued Caroline, "will be so glad to hear you are come back. He will hasten to pay you his respects, and apologize for his truants. But I have not formally introduced you to my fellow-offender. My dear, let me present to you one whom Fame has already made known to you—Mr. Maltravers, Miss Cameron, daughter-in-law," she added, in a lower voice, "to the late Lord Vargrave."

At the first part of this introduction Maltravers frowned—at the last, he forgot all displeasure.

"Is it possible? I *thought* I had seen you before, but in a dream. Ah! then we are not quite strangers!"

Evelyn's eye met his, and though she colored and strove to look grave, a half smile brought out the dimples that played round her arch lips.

"But do you not remember me?" added Maltravers.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Evelyn, with a sudden impulse; and then checked herself.

Caroline came to her friends relief.

"What is this?—you surprise me—where did you ever see Mr. Maltravers before?"

"I can answer that question, Miss Merton. When Miss Cameron was but a child, as high as my little friend here, an accident on the road procured me her acquaintance; and the sweetness and fortitude she then displayed left an impression on me not worn out even to this day. And thus we meet again," added Maltravers, in a muttered voice, as to himself. "How strange a thing life is!"

"Well," said Miss Merton, "we must intrude on you no more—you have so much to do. I am so sorry Sir John is not down to welcome you; but I hope we shall be good neighbors. *Au revoir!*"

And, fancying herself most charming, Caroline bowed, smiled, and walked off with her train. Maltravers paused irresolute. If Evelyn had looked back, he would have accompanied them home; but Evelyn did not look back,—and he stayed.

Miss Merton rallied her young friend unmercifully, as they walked homeward, and she extracted a very brief and imperfect history of the adventure that had formed the first acquaintance, and of the interview by which it had been renewed. But Evelyn did not heed her; and the moment they arrived at the rectory, she hastened to shut herself in her room, and write the account of her adventure to her mother. How often in her girlish reveries, had she thought of that incident — that stranger! And now, by such a chance, and after so many years, to meet the Unknown, by his own hearth! and that Unknown to be Maltravers! It was as if a dream had come true. While she was yet musing—and the letter not yet begun—she heard the sound of joy-bells in the distance—at once she divined the cause; it was the welcome of the wanderer to his solitary home!

CHAPTER IV.

"Mais en connaissant votre condition naturelle, usez des moyens qui lui sont propres, et ne pretendez pas régner par une autre voie que par delle qui vous fait roi." *—PASCAL.

IN the heart, as in the ocean, the great tides ebb and flow. The waves which had once urged on the spirit of Ernest Maltravers to the rocks and shoals of active life, had long since receded back npon the calm depths, and left the strand bare. With a melancholy and disappointed mind, he had quitted the land of his birth; and new scenes, strange and wild, had risen before his wandering gaze. Wearied with civilization, and sated with many of the triumphs for which civilized men drudge and toil, and disquiet themselves in vain, he had plunged amongst hordes, scarce redeemed from primæval barbarism. The adventures through which he had passed, and in which life itself could only be preserved by wary vigilance, and ready energies, had forced him, for a while, from the indulgence of morbid contemplations. His heart, indeed, had been left inactive; but his intellect and his physical powers had been kept in hourly exercise. He returned to the world of his equals with a mind laden with the treasures of a various and vast experience, and with much of the same gloomy moral as that which, on emerging

* But in understanding your natural condition, use the means which are proper to it; and pretend not to govern by any other way, than by that which constitutes you governor.

ftom the Catacombs, assured the restless speculations of Rasselas of the vanity of human life and the folly of moral aspirations.

Ernest Maltravers, never a faultless or completed character, falling short in practice of his own capacities, moral and intellectual, from his very desire to overpass the limits of the Great and Good, was seemingly as far as heretofore from the grand secret of life. It was not so in reality—his mind had acquired what before it wanted—*hardness;* and we are nearer to true virtue and true happiness when we demand too little from men, than when we exact too much.

Nevertheless, partly from the strange life that had thrown him amongst men whom safety itself made it necessary to command despotically, partly from the hahit of power, and disdain of the world, his nature was incrusted with a stern imperiousness of manner, often approaching to the harsh and morose, though beneath it lurked generosity and benevolence.

Many of his younger feelings, more amiable and complex, had settled into one predominant quality, which more or less had always characterized him—Pride ! Self-esteem made inactive, and Ambition made discontented, usually engender haughtiness. In Maltravers this quality, which, properly controlled and duly softened, is the essence and life of honor, was carried to a vice. He was perfectly conscious of its excess, but he cherished it as a virtue. Pride had served to console him in sorrow, and, therefore, it was a friend; it had supported him when disgusted with fraud, or in resistance to violence, and, therefore, it was a champion and a fortress. It was a pride of a peculiar sort—it attached itself to no one point in especial—not to talent, knowledge, mental gifts—still less to the vulgar commonplaces of birth and fortune; it rather resulted from a supreme and wholsale contempt of all other men, and all their objects—of ambition—of glory—of the hard business of life. His favorite virtue was fortitude; it was on this that he now mainly valued himself. He was proud of his struggles against others —prouder still of conquests over his own passions. He looked upon FATE as the arch enemy against whose attacks we should ever prepare. He fancied that against fate he had thoroughly schooled himself. In the arrogance of his heart he said, "I can defy the future." He believed in the boast of the vain old sage—"I am a world to myself!" In the wild career through which his later manhood had passed, it is true that he had not carried his philosophy into a rejection of the ordinary world. The shock occasioned by the death of Florence yielded gradually to time and change; and he had passed from the deserts of Africa and the East to the brilliant cities of Europe. But neither his heart nor his reason had ever again been enslaved by his passions. Never again had he known the softness of affection. Had he done so, the ice had been thawed, and the fountain had flowed once more into the great deeps. He had returned to England; he scarce knew wherefore, or with what intent; certainly not with any idea of entering again upon the occupations of active life;—it was, perhaps, only the weariness of foreign scenes and unfamiliar tongues, and the vague, unsettled desire of change, that brought him back to the fatherland.

But he did not allow so unphilosophical a cause to himself; and, what was strange, he would not allow one much more amiable, and which was, perhaps, the truer cause—the increasing age and infimities of his old guardian Cleveland, who prayed him affectionately to return. Maltravers did not like to believe that his heart was still so kind. Singular form of pride ! No, he rather sought to persuade himself that he intended to sell Burleigh, to arrange his affairs finally, and then quit for ever his native land. To prove to himself that this was the case, he had intended at Dover to hurry at once to Burleigh, and merely write to Cleveland that he was returned to England. But his heart would not suffer him to enjoy this cruel luxury of self-mortification, and his horses' heads were turned to Richmond, when within a stage of London. He had spent two days with the good old man, and those two days had so warmed and softened his feelings, that he was quite appalled at his own dereliction from fixed principles ! However, he went before Cleveland had time to discover that he was changed; and the old man had promised to visit him shortly.

This, then, was the state of Ernest Maltravers, at the age of thirty-six—an age in which frame and mind are in their fullest perfection,

—an age in which men begin most keenly to feel that they are citizens. With all his energies braced and strenghtened—with his mind stored with profusest gifts—in the vigor of a constitution to which a hardy life had imparted a second and fresher youth—so trained by stern experience as to redeem, with an easy effort, all the deficiencies and faults which had once resulted from too sensitive an imagination, and too high a standard for human actions; —formed to render to his race the most brilliant and durable service, and to secure to himself the happiness which results from sobered fancy—a generous heart, and an approving conscience;—here was Ernest Maltravers, backed, too, by the appliances and gifts of birth and fortune—perversely shutting up genius, life, and soul, in their own thorny leaves—and refusing to serve the fools and rascals, who were formed from the same clay, and gifted by the same God. Morbid and morose philosophy, begot by a proud spirit on a lonely heart!

CHAPTER V.

"Let such amongst us as are willing to be children again, if it be only for an hour, resign ourselves to the sweet enchantment that steals upon the spirit when it indulges in the memory of early and innocent enjoyment."—D. L. RICHARDSON.

AT dinner, Caroline's lively recital of their adventures was received with much interest, not only by the Merton family, but by some of the neighboring gentry who shared the rector's hospitality. The sudden return of any proprietor to his old hereditary seat after a prolonged absence makes some sensation in a provincial neighborhood. In this case, where the proprietor was still young, unmarried, celebrated, and handsome, the sensation was of course proportionably increased. Caroline and Evelyn were beset by questions, to which the former alone gave any distinct reply. Caroline's account was, on the whole, gracious and favorable, and seemed complimentary to all but Evelyn, who thought that Caroline was a very indifferent portrait-painter.

It seldom happens that a man is a prophet in his own neighborhood; but Maltravers had been so little in the county, and in his former visit, his life had been so secluded, that he was regarded as a stranger. He had neither outshone the establishment, nor interfered with the sporting, of his fellow-squires; and, on the whole, they made just allowance for his habits of distant reserve. Time, and his retirement from the busy scene, long enough to cause him to be missed, not long enough for new favorites to supply his place, had greatly served to mellow and consolidate his reputation, and his country was proud to claim him. Thus (though Maltravers would not have believed it, had an angel told him) he was not spoken ill of behind his back: a thousand little anecdotes of his personal habits, of his generosity, independence of spirit, and eccentricity, were told. Evelyn listened in rapt delight to all; she had never passed so pleasant an evening; and she smiled almost gratefully on the rector, who was a man that always followed the stream, when he said with benign affability, "We must really show our distinguished neighbor every attention—we must be indulgent to his little oddities: his politics are not mine, to be sure: but a man who has a stake in the country has a right to his own opinion—that was always my maxim:—thank Heaven, I am a very moderate man—we must draw him amongst us: it will be our own fault, I am sure, if he is not quite domesticated at the rectory."

"With such attraction—yes," said the thin curate, timidly bowing to the ladies.

"It would be a nice match for Miss Caroline," whispered an old lady; Caroline overheard, and pouted her pretty lip.

The whist-tables were now set out—the music begun—and Maltravers were left in peace.

The next day Mr. Merton rode his pony over to Burleigh. Maltravers was not at home. He left his card, and a note of friendly respect, begging Mr. Maltravers to waive ceremony, and dine with them the next day. Somewhat to the surprise of the rector, he found that the active spirit of Maltravers was already at work. The long deserted grounds were filled with laborers; the carpenters were busy at the fences; the house looked alive and stirring; the grooms were exercising the horses in the park: all betokened the return of the absentee. This seemed to denote that Maltravers had come to reside; and the

rector thought of Caroline, and was pleased at the notion.

The next day was Cecilia's birthday; and birthdays were kept at Merton Rectory:—the neighboring children were invited. They were to dine on the lawn, in a large marquee, and to dance in the evening. The hothouses yielded their easly strawberries, and the cows, decorated with blue ribands, were to give syllabubs. The polite Caroline was not greatly fascinated by pleasure of this kind: she graciously appeared at dinner—kissed the prettiest of the children—helped them to soup, and then, having done her duty, retired to her room to write letters. The children were not sorry, for they were a little afraid of the grand Caroline; and they laughed much more loudly, and made much more noise, when she was gone—and the cakes and strawberries appeared.

Evelyn was in her element; she had, as a child, mixed so little with children—she had so often yearned for playmates—she was still so childlike:—besides, she was so fond of Cecilia—she had looked forward with innocent delight to the day: and a week before had taken the carriage to the neighboring town, to return with a carefully concealed basket of toys—dolls, sashes, and picture-books. But somehow or other, she did not feel so childlike as usual that morning; her heart was away from the pleasure before her; and her smile was at first languid. But in children's mirth there is something so contagious to those who love children;—and now, as the party scattered themselves on the grass, and Evelyn opened the basket and bade them with much gravity keep quiet, and be good children, she was the happiest of the whole group. But she knew how to give pleasure; and the basket was presented to Cecilia, that the little queen of the day might enjoy the luxury of being generous; and to prevent jealousy, the notable expedient of a lottery was suggested.

"Then Evy shall be Fortune!" cried Cecilia; "nobody will be sorry to get any thing from Evy—and if any one is discontented, Evy sha'n't kiss her."

Mrs. Merton, whose motherly heart was completely won by Evelyn's kindness to the children, forgot all her husband's lectures, and willingly ticketted the prizes, and wrote the numbers of the lots on slips of paper carefully folded. A large old Indian jar was dragged from the drawing-room and constituted the fated urn—the tickets were deposited therein, and Cecilia was tying the handkerchief round Evelyn's eyes—while Fortune struggled archly not to be as blind as she ought to be—and the children, seated in a circle, were in full joy and expectation, when—there was a sudden pause—the laughter stopped—so did Cissy's little hands.—What could it be? Evelyn slipped the bandage, and her eyes rested on Maltravers!

"Well, really, my dear Miss Cameron," said the rector, who was by the side of the intruder, and who, indeed, had just brought him to the spot, "I don't know what these little folks will do to you next."

"I ought rather to be their victim," said Maltravers, good-humoredly; "the fairies always punish us grown-up mortals for trespassing on their revels."

While he spoke, his eyes—those eyes, the most eloquent in the world—dwelt on Evelyn (as, to cover her blushes, she took Cecilia in her arms, and appeared to attend to nothing else), with a look of such admiration and delight as a mortal might well be supposed to cast on some beautiful fairy.

Sophy, a very bold child, ran up to him. "How do, sir?" she lisped, putting up her face to be kissed—"how's the pretty peacock?"

This opportune audacity served at once to renew the charm that had been broken—to unite the stranger with the children. Here was acquaintance claimed and allowed in an instant. The next moment Maltravers was one of the circle—on the turf with the rest—as gay, and almost as noisy—that hard, proud man, so disdainful of the trifles of the world!

"But the gentleman must have a prize, too," said Sophy, proud of her tall new friend; "what's your other name?—why do you have such a long, hard name?"

"Call me Ernest," said Maltravers.

"Why don't we begin?" cried the children.

"Evy, come, be a good child, miss," said Sophy, as Evelyn, vexed and ashamed, and half ready to cry, resisted the bandage.

Mr. Merton interposed his authority; but the the children clamored, and Evelyn hastily yielded. It was Fortune's duty to draw the tickets from the urn, and give them to each

claimant, whose name was called: when it came to the turn of Maltravers, the bandage did not conceal the blush and smile of the enchanting goddess; and the hand of the aspirant thrilled as it touched hers.

The children burst into screams of laughter when Cecilia gravely awarded to Maltravers the worst prize in the lot—a blue riband—which Sophy, however, greedily insisted on having; but Maltravers would not yield it.

Maltravers remained all day at the rectory, and shared in the ball—yes, he danced with Evelyn—he—Maltravers—who had never been known to dance since he was twenty-two! The ice was fairly broken—Maltravers was at home with the Mertons. And when he took his solitary walk to his solitary house—over the little bridge, and through the shadowy wood—astonished, perhaps, with himself—every one of the guests, from the oldest to the youngest, pronounced him delightful. Caroline, perhaps, might have been piqued some months ago, that he did not dance with *her;* but now, her heart—such as it was—felt pre-occupied.

CHAPTER VI.

"L'esprit de l'homme est plus pénétrant que consé quent, et embrasse plus qu'il ne peut lier." *

—VAUVENARGUES.

AND now Maltravers was constantly with the Merton famlly; there was no need of excuse for familiarity on his part. Mr. Merton, charmed to find his advances not rejected, thrust intimacy upon him.

One day they spent the afternoon at Burleigh, and Evelyn and Caroline finished their survey of the house—tapestry and armor, pictures, and all. This led to a visit to the Arabian horses. Caroline observed that she was very fond of riding, and went into ecstacies with one of the animals—the one, of course, with the longest tail. The next day the horse was in the stables at the rectory, and a gallant epistle apologized for the costly gift.

Mr. Merton demurred, but Caroline always had her own way; and so the horse remained (no doubt, in much amazement and disdain) with the parson's pony and the brown carriage horses. The gift naturally conduced to parties on horseback—it was cruel entirely to separate the Arab from his friends—and, how was Evelyn to be left behind? Evelyn, who had never yet ridden any thing more spirited than an old pony? A beautiful little horse belonging to an elderly lady—now growing too stout to ride, was to be sold hard by. Maltravers discovered the treasure, and apprised Mr. Merton of it—he was too delicate to affect liberality to the rich heiress. The horse was bought; nothing could go quieter—Evelyn was not at all afraid. They made two or three little excursions. Sometimes only Mr. Merton and Maltravers accompanied the young ladies—sometimes the party was more numerous. Maltravers appeared to pay equal attention to Caroline and her friend—still Evelyn's inexperience in equestrian matters was an excuse for his being ever by her side. They had a thousand opportunities to converse; and Evelyn now felt more at home with him; her gentle gaiety, her fanciful yet chastened intellect, found a voice. Maltravers was not slow to discover that beneath her simplicity there lurked sense, judgment, and imagination. Insensibly his own conversation took a higher flight. With the freedom which his mature years and reputation gave him, he mingled eloquent instruction with lighter and more trifling subjects: he directed her earnest and docile mind, not only to the new fields of written knowledge, but to many of the secrets of nature—subtle or sublime. He had a wide range of scientific as well as literary lore:—the stars, the flowers, the phenomena of the physical world, afforded themes on which he descanted with the fervent love of a poet and the easy knowledge of a sage.

Mr. Merton, observing that little or nothing of sentiment mingled with their familiar intercourse, felt perfectly at ease; and knowing that Maltravers had been intimate with Lumley, he naturally concluded that he was aware of the engagement between Evelyn and his friend. Meanwhile Maltravers appeared unconscious that such a being as Lord Vargrave existed.

It is not to be wondered at, that the daily presence — the delicate flattery of attention

* The spirit of man is more penetrating than logical, and gathers more than it can garner.

from a man like Maltravers — should strongly impress the imagination, if not the heart, of a susceptible girl. Already prepossessed in his favor, and wholly unaccustomed to a society which combined so many attractions, Evelyn regarded him with unspeakable veneration; to the darker shades in his character she was blind—to her indeed, they did not appear. True that, once or twice in mixed society, his disdainful and imperious temper broke hastily and harshly forth, To folly—to pretension—to presumption—he showed but slight forbearance. The impatient smile, the biting sarcasm, the cold repulse, that might gall, yet could scarce be openly resented, betrayed that he was one who affected to free himself from the polished restraints of social intercourse. He had once been too scrupulous in not wounding vanity; he was now too indifferent to it.

But if sometimes this unamiable trait of character, as displayed to others, chilled or startled Evelyn, the contrast of this manner towards herself was a flattery too delicious not to efface all other recollections. To her ear his voice always softened its tone—to her capacity his mind ever bent as by sympathy —not-condescension; to her—the young, the timid, the half-informed—to her alone he did not disdain to exhibit all the stores of his knowledge—all the best and brightest colors of his mind. She modestly wondered at so strange a preference. Perhaps a sudden and blunt compliment which Maltravers once addressed to her may explain it: one day, when she had conversed more freely and more fully than usual, he broke in upon her with this abrupt exclamation—

"Miss Cameron, you must have associated from your childhood with beautiful minds. I see already, that from the world, vile as it is, you have nothing of contagion to fear. I have heard you talk on the most various matters—on many of which your knowledge is imperfect; but you have never uttered one mean idea, or one false sentiment. Truth seems intuitive to you."

It was, indeed, this singular purity of heart which made to the world-wearied man the chief charm in Evelyn Cameron. From this purity came, as from the heart of a poet, a thousand new and heaven-taught thoughts, which had in them a wisdom of their own—thoughts that often brought the stern listener back to youth, and reconciled him with life. The wise Maltravers learned more from Evelyn, than Evelyn did from Maltravers.

There was, however, another trait—deeper than that of temper—in Maltravers, and which was, unlike the latter, more manifest to her than to others; his contempt for all the things her young and fresh enthusiasm had been taught to prize—the fame that endeared and hallowed him to her eyes—the excitement of ambition, and its rewards. He spoke with such bitter disdain of great names and great deeds—"Children of a larger growth they were," said he, one day, in answer to her defence of the luminaries of their kind; "allured by baubles as poor as the rattle and the doll's house—how many have been made great, as the word is, by their vices! Paltry craft won command to Themistocles. To escape his duns, the profligate Cæsar heads an army, and achieves his laurels. Brutus, the aristocrat, stabs his patron, that patricians might again trample on plebeians, and that posterity might talk of *him*. The love of posthumous fame—what is it but as puerile a passion for notoriety, as that which made a Frenchman I once knew lay out two thousand pounds in sugar-plums?—To be talked of—how poor a desire! Does it matter whether it be by the gossips of this age or the next? Some men are urged on to fame by poverty—that is an excuse for their trouble; but there is no more nobleness in the motive, than in that which makes yon poor ploughman sweat in the eye of Phœbus. In fact, the larger part of eminent men, instead of being inspired by any lofty desire to benefit their species, or enrich the human mind, have acted or composed, without any definite object beyond the satisfying a restless appetite for excitement, or indulging the dreams of a selfish glory. And, when nobler aspirations have fired them, it has too often been but to wild fanaticism and sanguinary crime. What dupes of glory ever were animated by a deeper faith, a higher ambition, than the frantic followers of Mahomet? —taught to believe that it was virtue to ravage the earth, and that they sprang from the battle-field into Paradise. Religion and liberty—love of country—what splendid motives to action! Lo, the results, when the motives are keen—the action once commenced! Behold the Inquisition; the Days of Terror; the

Council of Ten; and the Dungeons of Venice!"

Evelyn was scarcely fit to wrestle with these melancholy fallacies; but her instinct of truth suggested an answer.

"What would society be, if all men, thought as you do, and acted up to the theory! No literature, no art, no glory, no patriotism, no virtue, no civilization! You analyze men's motives—how can you be sure you judge rightly? Look to the results—our benefit, our enlightenment! If the results be great, Ambition is a virtue, no matter what motive awakened it. Is it not so?"

Evelyn spoke blushingly and timidly. Maltravers, despite his own tenets, was delighted with her reply.

"You reason well," said he, with a smile. "But how are we sure that the results are such as you depict them? Civilization—enlightenment—they are vague terms—hollow sounds. Never fear that the world will reason as I do. Action will never be stagnant while there are such things as gold and power. The vessel will move on—let the galley-slaves have it to themselves. What I have seen of life convinces me that progress is not always improvement. Civilization has evils unknown to the saveage state; and *vice versâ*. Men in all states seem to have much the same proportion of happiness. We judge others with eyes accustomed to dwell on our own circumstances. I have seen the slave, whom we commiserate, enjoy his holiday with a rapture unknown to the grave freeman. I have seen that slave made free, and enriched by the benevolence of his master; and he has been gay no more. The masses of men in all countries are much the same.

"If there are greater comforts in the hardy North, Providence bestows a fertile earth and a glorious heaven, and a mind susceptible to enjoyment as flowers to light, on the voluptuous indulgence of the Italian, or the contented apathy of the Hindoo. In the mighty organization of good and evil, what can we vain individuals effect? They who labor most, how doubtful is their reputation!—Who shall say whether Voltaire or Napoleon, Cromwell or Cæsar, Walpole or Pitt, has done most good or most evil. It is a question casuists may dispute on. Some of us think that poets have been the delight and the lights of men. Another school of philosophy has treated them as the corrupters of the species—panders to the false glory of war, to the effeminacies of taste, to the pampering of the passions above the reason. Nay, even those who have effected inventions that change the face of the earth—the printing-press, gunpowder, the steam-engine,—men hailed as benefactors by the unthinking herd, or the would-be sages—have introduced ills unknown before; adulterating and often counterbalancing the good. Each new improvement in machinery deprives hundreds of food. Civilzation is the eternal sacrifice of one generation to the next. An awful sense of the impotence of human agencies has crushed down the sublime aspirations for mankind which I once indulged. For myself, I float on the great waters without pilot or rudder, and trust passively to the winds, that are the breath of God."

This conversation left a deep impression upon Evelyn; it inspired her with a new interest in one in whom so many noble qualities lay dulled and torpid, by the indulgence of a self-sophistry, which, girl as she was, she felt wholly unworthy of his powers. And it was this error in Maltravers that, levelling his superiority, brought him nearer to her heart. Ah! if she could restore him to his race!—it was a dangerous desire—but it intoxicated and absorbed her.

Oh! how sweetly were those fair evenings spent—the evenings of happy June! And then, as Maltravers suffered the children to tease him into talk about the wonders he had seen in the regions far away, how did the soft and social hues of his character unfold themselves! There is in all real genius so much latent playfulness of nature, it almost seems as if genius never could grow old. The inscription that youth writes upon the tablets of an imaginative mind are, indeed, never wholly obliterated—they are as an invisible writting, which gradually becomes clear in the light and warmth. Bring genius familiarly with the young, and it is as young as they are. Evelyn did not yet, therefore, observe the disparity of *years* between herself and Maltravers. But the disparity of knowledge and power served for the present to interdict to her that sweet feeling of equality in commune, without which love is rarely a very intense affection in women. It is not so with men. But by degrees she

grew more and more familiar with her stern friend; and in that familiarity there was perilous fascination to Maltravers. She could laugh him at any moment out of his most moody reveries—contradict with a pretty wilfulness his most favorite dogmas—nay, even scold him, with bewitching gravity, if he was not always at the command of her wishes—or caprice. At this time it seemed certain that Maltravers would fall in love with Evelyn; but it rested on more doubtful probabilities whether Evelyn would fall in love with him.

CHAPTER VII.

* * * "Contrahe vela
Et te littoribus cymba propinqua vehat." *
—SENECA.

"HAS not Miss Cameron a beautiful countenance?" said Mr. Merton to Maltravers, as Evelyn, unconscious of the compliment, sate at a little distance, bending down her eyes to Sophy, who was weaving daisy-chains on a stool at her knee, and whom she was telling not to talk loud—for Merton had been giving Maltravers some useful information respecting the management of his estate; and Evelyn was already interested in all that could interest her friend. She had one excellent thing in woman, had Evelyn Cameron: despite her sunny cheerfulness of temper she was *quiet;* and she had insensibly acquired, under the roof of her musing and silent mother, the habit of never disturbing others. What a blessed secret is that in the intercourse of domestic life!

"Has not Miss Cameron a beautiful countenance?"

Maltravers started at the question—it was a literal translation of his own thought at that moment—he checked the enthusiasm that rose to his lip, and calmly re-echoed the word—

"Beautiful, indeed!"

"And so sweet-tempered and unaffected—she has been admirably brought up. I believe Lady Vargrave is a most exemplary woman. Miss Cameron, will, indeed, be a treasure to her betrothed husband. He is to be envied."

"Her betrothed husband!" said Maltravers, turning very pale.

"Yes; Lord Vargrave. Did you not know that she was engaged to him from her childhood? It was the wish, nay, command, of the late lord, who bequeathed her his vast fortune, if not on that condition, at least, on that understanding. Did you never hear of this before?"

While Mr. Merton spoke, a sudden recollection returned to Maltravers. He *had* heard Lumley himself refer to the engagement, but it had been in the sick chamber of Florence—little heeded at the time, and swept from his mind by a thousand after-thoughts and scenes. Mr. Merton continued—

"We expect Lord Vargrave down soon. He is an ardent lover, I conclude; but public life chains him so much to London. He made an admirable speech in the Lords last night; at least, our party appear to think so. They are to be married when Miss Cameron attains the age of eighteen."

Accustomed to endurance, and skilled in the proud art of concealing emotion, Martravers betrayed to the eye of Mr. Merton no symptom of surprise or dismay at this intelligence. If the rector had conceived any previous suspicion that Maltravers was touched beyond mere admiration for beauty, the suspicion would have vanished, as he heard his guest coldly reply—

"I trust Lord Vargrave may deserve his happiness. But, to return to Mr. Justis—you corroborate my own opinion of that smooth-spoken gentleman."

The conversation flowed back to business At last, Maltravers rose to depart.

"Will you not dine with us to day?" said the hospitable rector.

"Many thanks—no; I have much business to attend to at home for some days to come."

"Kiss Sophy, Mr. Ernest—Sophy very good girl to-day. Let the pretty butterfly go, because Evy said it was cruel to put it in a card-box—Kiss Sophy."

Maltravers took the child (whose heart he had completely won) in his arms, and kissed her tenderly; then, advancing to Evelyn, he held out his hand, while his eyes were fixed upon her with an expression of deep and mournful interest, which she could not understand.

* Furl your sails, and let the next boat carry you to the shore.

"God bless you, Miss Cameron!" he said, and his lip quivered.

Days passed, and they saw no more of Maltravers. He excused himself on pretence, now of business—now of other engagements—from all the invitations of the rector. Mr. Merton, unsuspectingly, accepted the excuse; for he knew that Maltravers was necessarily much occupied.

His arrival had now spread throughout the country; and such of his equals as were still in B——shire hastened to offer congratulations, and press hospitality. Perhaps it was the desire to make his excuses to Merton valid, which prompted the master of Burleigh, to yield to the other invitations that crowded on him. But this was not all—Maltravers acquired in the neighborhood the reputation of a man of business. Mr. Justis was abruptly dismissed; with the help of the bailiff, Maltravers became his own steward. His parting address to this personage was characteristic of the mingled harshness and justice of Maltravers.

"Sir," said he, as they closed their accounts, "I discharge you because you are a rascal—there can be no dispute about that: you have plundered your owner, yet you have ground his tenants, and neglected the poor. My villages are filled with paupers—my rentroll is reduced a fourth—and yet while some of my tenants appear to pay nominal rents (why, you best know!), others are screwed up higher than any man's in the county. You are a rogue, Mr. Justis—your own account-books show it: and if I send them to a lawyer, you would have to refund a sum that I could apply very advantageously to the rectification of your blunders."

"I hope, sir," said the steward, conscience-stricken and appalled,—"I hope you will not ruin me; indeed,—indeed, if I was called upon to refund, I should go to jail."

"Make yourself easy, sir. It is just that I should suffer as well as you. My neglect of my own duties tempted you to roguery. You were honest under the vigilant eye of Mr. Cleveland. Retire with your gains: if you are quite hardened, no punishment can touch you; if you are not, it is punishment enough to stand there gray-haired, with one foot in the grave, and hear yourself called a rogue, and know that you cannot defend yourself—go!"

Maltraves next occupied himself in all the affairs that a mismanaged estate brought upon him. He got rid of some tenants—he made new arrangements with others—he called labor into requisition by a variety of improvements—he paid minute attention to the poor, not in the weakness of careless and indiscriminate charity, by which popularity is so cheaply purchased, and independence so easily degraded; no, his main care was to stimulate industry and raise hope. The ambition and emulation that he so vainly denied in himself, he found his most useful levers in the humble laborers whose characters he had studied, whose condition he sought to make themselves desire to elevate. Unconsciously his whole practice began to refute his theories. The abuses of the old Poor-Laws were rife in his neighborhood; his quick penetration, and, perhaps, his imperious habits of decision, suggested to him many of the best provisions of the law now called into operation; but he was too wise to be the Philosopher Square of a system. He did not attempt too much; and he recognized one principle, which, as yet, the administrators of the new Poor-Laws have not sufficiently discovered. One main object of the new code was, by curbing public charity, to task the activity of individual benevolence. If the proprietor or the clergyman find under his own eye isolated instances of severity, oppression, or hardship, in a general and salutary law, instead of railing against the law, he ought to attend to the individual instances; and private benevolence ought to keep the balance of the scales even, and be the make-weight wherever there is a just deficiency of national charity.*

It was this which, in the modified and discreet regulations that he sought to establish on his estates, Maltravers especially and pointedly attended to. Age, infirmity, temporary distress, unmerited destitution, found him a steady, watchful, indefatigable friend. In these labors, commenced with extraordinary promptitude, and the energy of a single purpose and stern mind, Maltravers was necessarily brought into contact with the neigh-

* The object of parochial reform is not that of economy alone; not merely to reduce poor-rates. The rate-payer aught to remember, that the more he wrests from the gripe of the sturdy mendicant, the more he ought to bestow on undeserved distress. Without the mitigations of private virtue, every law that benevolists could make would be harsh.

boring magistrates and gentry. He was combating evils and advancing objects in which all were interested; and his vigorous sense, and his past parliamentary reputation, joined with the respect which in provinces always attaches to ancient birth, won unexpected and general favor to his views. At the rectory they heard of him constantly, not only through occasional visitors, but through Mr. Merton, who was ever thrown in his way; but he continued to keep himself aloof from the house. Every one (Mr. Merton excepted) missed him; even Caroline, whose able though worldly mind could appreciate his conversation; the children mourned for their playmate, who was so much more affable than their own stiff-neckclothed brothers; and Evelyn was at least more serious and thoughtful than she had ever been before; and the talk of others seemed to her wearisome, trite, and dull.

Was Maltravers happy in his new pursuits? He was one of mind at that time it is not easy to read. His masculine spirit and haughty temper were wrestling hard against a feeling that had been fast ripening into passion; but at night, in his solitary and cheerless home, a vision, too exquisite to indulge, would force itself upon him, till he started from the revery, and said to his rebellious heart, "A few more years, and thou wilt be still. What in this brief life is a pang more or less? Better to have nothing to care for, so wilt thou defraud Fate, thy deceitful foe! Be contented that thou art alone!"

Fortunate was it, then, for Maltravers, that he was in his native land! not in climes where excitement is in the pursuit of pleasure rather than in the exercise of duties! In the hardy air of the liberal England he was already, though unknown to himself, bracing and ennobling his dispositions and desires. It is the boast of this island, that the slave whose foot touches the soil is free. The boast may be enlarged. Where so much is left to the people—where the life of civilization, not locked up in the tyranny of Central Depotism, spreads, vivifying, restless, ardent, through every vein of the healthful body, the most distant province, the obscurest village, has claims on our exertions, our duties, and forces us into energy and citizenship. The spirit of liberty, that strikes the chain from the slave, binds the freeman to his brother. This is the Religion of Freedom. And hence it is that the stormy struggles of free states have been blessed with results of Virtue, of Wisdom, and of Genius—by him who bade us love one another—not only that love in itself is excellent, but that from love, which in its widest sense is but the spiritual term for liberty, whatever is worthiest of our solemn nature has its birth.

BOOK THIRD.

Τραχέα λειαίνει, πανύει κόρον.
ΕΞ. SOLON *Elog.*

Harsh things he mitigates, and pride subdues.

CHAPTER I.

"You still are what you were, sir!
*** * * ***
. . . "With most quick agility could turn
And return; make knots and undo them—
Give forked counsel."—*Volpone, or the Fox.*

BEFORE a large table, covered with parliamentary papers, sate Lumley Lord Vargrave. His complexion, though still healthy, had faded from the freshness of hue which distinguished him in youth. His features, always sharp, had grown yet more angular: his brows seemed to project more broodingly over his eyes, which, though of undiminished brightness, were sunk deep in their sockets, and had lost much of their quick restlessness. The character of his mind had begun to stamp itself on the physiognomy, especially on the mouth when in repose;—it was a face, striking for acute intelligence—for concentrated energy—but there was a something written in it, which said—"BEWARE!" It would have inspired any one, who had mixed much amongst men, with a vague suspicion and distrust.

Lumley had been always careful, though plain, in dress; but there was now a more evident attention bestowed on his person than he had ever manifested in youth;—while there was something of the Roman's celebrated foppery in the skill with which his hair was arranged on his high forehead, so as either to conceal or relieve a partial baldness at the temples. Perhaps, too, from the possession of high station, or the habit of living only amongst the great, there was a certain dignity insensibly diffused over his whole person, that was not noticeable in his earlier years—when a certain *ton de garnison* was blended with his ease of manners; yet even now, dignity was not his prevalent characteristic; and in ordinary occasions, or mixed society, he still found a familiar frankness, a more useful species of simulation. At the time we now treat of, Lord Vargrave was leaning his cheek on one hand, while the others rested idly on the papers methodically arranged before him. He appeared to have suspended his labors, and to be occupied in thought. It was, in truth, a critical period in the career of Lord Vargrave.

From the time of his accession to the peerage, the rise of Lumley Ferrers had been less rapid and progressive than he himself could have forseen. At first, all was sunshine before him; he had contrived to make himself useful to his party—he had also made himself personally popular. To the ease and cordiality of his happy address, he added the seemingly careless candor so often mistaken for honesty; while, as there was nothing showy or brilliant in his abilities or oratory—nothing that aspired far above the pretensions of others, and aroused envy by mortifying self-love—he created but little jealousy even amongst the rivals before whom he obtained precedence. For some time, therefore, he went smoothly on, continuing to rise in the estimation of his party, and commanding a certain respect from the neutral public, by acknowledged and eminent talents in the details of business; for his quickness of penetration, and a logical habit of mind, enabled him to grapple with and generalize the minutiæ of official labor, or of legislative enactments, with a masterly

success. But as the road became clearer to his steps, his ambition became more evident and daring. Naturally dictatorial and presumptuous, his early suppleness to superiors was now exchanged for a self-willed pertinacity, which often displeased the more haughty leaders of his party, and often wounded the more vain. His pretensions were scanned with eyes more jealous and less tolerant than at first.

Proud aristocrats began to recollect that a mushroom peerage was supported but by a scanty fortune—the men of more dazzling genius began to sneer at the red-tape minister as a mere official manager of details;—he lost much of the personal popularity which had been one secret of his power. But what principally injured him in the eyes of his party and the public, were certain ambiguous and obscure circumstances connected with a short period, when himself and his associates were thrown out of office. At this time, it was noticeable that the journals of the Government that succeeded were peculiarly polite to Lord Vargrave, while they covered all his coadjutors with obloquy; and it was more than suspected, that secret negotiations between himself and the new ministry were going on, when, suddenly, the latter broke up, and Lord Vargrave's proper party were reinstated. The vague suspicions that attached to Vargrave were somewhat strengthened in the opinion of the public, by the fact, that he was at first left out of the restored administration; and when subsequently, after a speech which showed that he could be mischievous if not propitiated, he was readmitted,—it was precisely to the same office he had held before — an office which did not admit him into the Cabinet. Lumley, burning with resentment, longed to decline the offer: but, alas ! he was poor: and what was worse, in debt;—"his poverty, but not his will, consented."

He was reinstated; but though prodigiously improved as a debater, he felt that he had not advanced as a public man. His ambition inflamed by his discontent, he had, since his return to office, strained every nerve to strengthen his position. He met the sarcasms on his poverty, by greatly increasing his expenditure; and by advertising every where his engagement to an heiress whose fortune, great as it was, he easily contrived to magnify. As his old house in Great George Street—well fitted for the bustling commoner —was no longer suited to the official and fashionable peer, he had, on his accession to the title, exchanged that respectable residence for a large mansion In Hamilton Place: and his sober dinners were succeeded by splendid banquets. Naturally, he had no taste for such things; his mind was too nervous, and his temper too hard, to take pleasure in luxury or ostentation. But now, as ever—he *acted upon a system.* Living in a country governed by the mightiest and wealthiest aristocracy in the world, which, from the first class almost to the lowest, ostentation pervades—the very backbone and marrow of society—he felt that to fall far short of his rivals in display was to give them an advantage which he could not compensate, either by the power of his connections or the surpassing loftiness of his character and genius. Playing for a great game, and with his eyes open to all the consequences, he cared not for involving his private fortunes in a lottery in which a great prize might be drawn.

To do Vargrave justice, money with him had never been an object, but a means—he was grasping, but not avaricious. If men much richer than Lord Vargrave find state distinctions very expensive, and often ruinous, it is not to be supposed that his salary, joined to so moderate a private fortune, could support the style in which he lived. His income was already deeply mortgaged, and debt accumulated upon debt. Nor had this man, so eminent for the management of public business, any of that talent which springs from *justice*, and makes its possessor a skilful manager of his own affairs. Perpetually absorbed in intrigues and schemes, he was too much engaged in cheating others on a large scale, to have time to prevent being himself cheated on a small one. He never looked into bills till he was compelled to pay them; and he never calculated the amount of an expense that seemed the least necessary to his purposes. But still Lord Vargrave relied upon his marriage with the wealthy Evelyn to relieve him from all his embarrassments; and if a doubt of the realization of that vision ever occurred to him, still public life had splendid prizes. Nay, should he fail with Miss Cameron, he even thought that, by good management, he might ulti-

mately make it worth while to his colleagues to purchase his absence with a gorgeous bribe of the Governor-Generalship of India.

As oratory is an art in which practice and the dignity of station produce marvellous improvement, so Lumley had of late made effects in the House of Lords of which he had once been judged incapable. It is true that no practice and no station can give men qualities in which they are wholly deficient; but these advantages can bring out in the best light all the qualities they *do* possess. The glow of a generous imagination—the grasp of a profound statesmanship—the enthusiasm of a noble nature—these no practice could educe from the eloquence of Lumley Lord Vargrave, for he had them not:—but bold wit—fluent and and vigorous sentences—effective arrangement of parliamentary logic—readiness of retort—plausibility of manner, aided by a delivery peculiar for self-possession and ease—a clear and ringing voice (to the only fault of which, shrillness without passion, the ear of the audience had grown accustomed) and a countenance impressive from its courageous intelligence;—all these had raised the promising speaker into the matured excellence of a nervous and formidable debater. But precisely as he rose in the display of his talents, did he awaken envies and enmities hitherto dormant. And it must be added, that, with all his craft and coldness, Lord Vargrave was often a very dangerous and mischievous speaker for the interests of his party.

His colleagues had often cause to tremble when he rose; nay, even when the cheers of his own faction shook the old tapestried walls. A man who has no sympathy with the public must commit many and fatal indiscretions when the public, as well as his audience, is to be his judge. Lord Vargrave's utter incapacity to comprehend political morality—his contempt for all the objects of social benevolence—frequently led him into the avowal of doctrines, which, if they did not startle the men of the world whom he addressed (smoothed away, as such doctrines were, by speciousness of manner and delivery), created deep disgust in those, even of his own politics, who read their naked exposition in the daily papers. Never did Lord Vargrave utter one of those generous sentiments which, no matter whether propounded by Radical or Tory, sink deep into the heart of the people, and do lasting service to the cause they adorn. But no man defended an abuse, however glaring, with a more vigorous championship, or hurled defiance upon a popular demand with a more courageous scorn. In some times, when the anti-popular principle is strong, such a leader may be useful; but at the moment of which we treat, he was a most equivocal auxiliary.

A considerable proportion of the ministers, headed by the Premier himself, a man of wise views and unimpeachable honor, had learned to view Lord Vargrave with dislike and distrust—they might have sought to get rid of him; but he was not one whom slight mortifications could induce to retire of his own accord: nor was the sarcastic and bold debater a person whose resentment and opposition could be despied. Lord Vargrave, moreover, had secured a party of his own—a party more formidable than himself. He went largely into society—he was the special favorite of the female diplomats, whose voices at that time were powerful suffrages, and with whom, by a thousand links of gallantry and intrigue, the agreeable and courteous minister formed a close alliance. All that salons could do for him was done. Added to this, he was personally liked by his royal master; and the Court gave him their golden opinions; while the poorer, the corrupter, and the more bigoted portion of the ministry, regarded him with avowed admiration.

In the House of Commons, too, and in the Bureaucracy, he had no inconsiderable strength; for Lumley never contracted the habits of personal abruptness and discourtesy common to men in power, who wish to keep applicants aloof. He was bland and conciliating to all men of all ranks: his intellect and self-complacency raised him far above the petty jealousies that great men feel for rising men. Did any tyro earn the smallest distinction in parliament, no man sought his acquaintance so eagerly as Lord Vargrave; no man complimented, encouraged, "brought on" the new aspirants of his party, with so hearty a good-will.

Such a minister could not fail of having devoted followers among the able, the ambitious, and the vain. It must also be confessed that Lord Vargrave neglected no baser and less justifiable means to cement his power, by

placing it on the sure rock of self-interest. No jobbing was too gross for him. He was shamefully corrupt in the disposition of his patronage; and no rebuffs, no taunts from his official brethren, could restrain him from urging the claims of any of his creatures upon the public purse. His followers regarded this charitable selfishness as the stanchness and zeal of friendship; and the ambition of hundreds was wound up in the ambition of the unprincipled minister.

But besides the notoriety of his public corruption, Lord Vargrave was secretly suspected by some of personal dishonesty—suspected of selling his state information to stock-jobbers—of having pecuniary interests in some of the claims he urged with so obstinate a pertinacity. And though there was not the smallest evidence of such utter abandonment of honor; though it was probably but a calumnious whisper; yet the mere suspicion of such practices served to sharpen the aversion of his enemies, and justify the disgust of his rivals.

In this position now stood Lord Vargrave; supported by interested, but able and powerful partisans; hated in the country, feared by some of those with whom he served, despised by others, looked up to by the rest. It was a situation that less daunted than delighted him; for it seemed to render necessary and excuse the habits of scheming and manœuvre which were so genial to his crafty and plotting temper. Like an ancient Greek, his spirit loved intrigue for intrigue's sake. Had it led to no end, it would still have been sweet to him as a means. He rejoiced to surround himself with the most complicated webs and meshes; to sit in the centre of a million plots. He cared not how rash and wild some of them were. He relied on his own ingenuity, promptitude, and habitual good fortune, to make every spring he handled conducive to the purpose of the machine—SELF.

His last visit to Lady Vargrave, and his conversation with Evelyn, had left on his mind much dissatisfaction and fear. In the earlier years of his intercourse with Evelyn, his good-humor, gallantry, and presents, had not failed to attach the child to the agreeable and liberal visitor she had been taught to regard as a relation. It was only as she grew up to womanhood, and learned to comprehend the nature of the tie between them, that she shrunk from his familiarity; and then only had he learned to doubt of the fulfilment of his uncle's wish. The last visit had increased this doubt to a painful apprehension; he saw that he was not loved; he saw that it required great address, and the absence of happier rivals, to secure to him the hand of Evelyn; and he cursed the duties and the schemes which necessarily kept him from her side. He had thought of persuading Lady Vargrave to let her come to London, where he could be ever at hand; and as the season was now set in, his representations on this head would appear sensible and just. But then again, this was to incur greater dangers than those he would avoid. London!—a beauty and an heiress, in her first *début* in London!—What formidable admirers would flock around her! Vargrave shuddered to think of the gay, handsome, well-dressed, seductive young *élégans*, who might seem, to a girl of seventeen, suitors far more fascinating than the middle-aged politician. This was perilous; nor was this all; Lord Vargrave knew that in London—gaudy, babbling, and remorseless London—all that he could most wish to conceal from the young lady would be dragged to day.

He had been the lover, not of one, but of a dozen women, for whom he did not care three straws; but whose favor had served to strengthen him in society; or whose influence made up for his own want of hereditary political connections. The manner in which he contrived to shake off these various Ariadnes, whenever it was advisable, was not the least striking proof of his diplomatic abilities. He never left them enemies. According to his own solution of the mystery, he took care never to play the gallant with Dulcineas under a certain age—"middle-aged women," he was wont to say, "are very little different from middle-aged men; they see things sensibly, and take things coolly." Now Evelyn could not be three weeks, perhaps three days, in London, without learning of one or the other of these *liaisons*. What an excuse, if she sought one, to break with him! Altogether, Lord Vargrave was sorely perplexed, but not despondent. Evelyn's fortune was more than ever necessary to him, and Evelyn he was resolved to obtain, since to that fortune she was an indispensible appendage.

CHAPTER II.

"You shall be Horace, and Tibullus I."—POPE.

LORD VARGRAVE was disturbed from his revery by the entrance of the Earl of Saxingham.

"You are welcome!" said Lumley, "welcome!—the very man I wished to see."

Lord Saxingham, who was scarcely altered since we met with him in the last series of this work, except that he had grown somewhat paler and thinner, and that his hair had changed from iron-gray to snow-white, threw himself in the arm-chair beside Lumley, and replied—

"Vargrave, it is really unpleasant, our finding ourselves always thus controlled by our own partisans. I do not understand this new-fangled policy—this squaring of measures, to please the opposition, and throw sops to that many-headed monster called Public Opinion. I am sure it will end most mischievously."

"I am satisfied of it," returned Lord Vargrave. "All vigor and union seem to have left us; and if they carry the * * * * question against us, I know not what is to be done."

"For my part I shall resign," said Lord Saxingham, doggedly; "it is the only alternative left to men of honor."

"You are wrong—I know another alternative."

"What is that?"

"Make a Cabinet of our own. Look ye, my dear lord; you have been ill-used—your high character, your long experience, are treated with contempt. It is an affront to you—the situation you hold. You Privy Seal!—you ought to be Premier—ay, and, if you are ruled by me, Premier you shall be yet."

Lord Saxingham colored, and breathed hard.

"You have often hinted at this before, Lumley; but you are so partial, so friendly."

"Not at all. You saw the leading article in the —— to day?—that will be followed up by two evening papers within five hours of this time. We have strength with the Press, with the Commons, with the Court—only let us hold fast together. This * * * * question, by which they hope to get rid of us, shall destroy them. You shall be Prime-minister before the year is ever—by Heaven, you shall!—and then, I suppose, *I* too may be admitted to the Cabinet!"

"But how—how, Lumley?—You are too rash, too daring."

"It has not been my fault hitherto—but boldness is caution in our circumstances. If they throw us out now, I see the inevitable march of events—we shall be out for years, perhaps for life. The Cabinet will recede more and more from our principles, our party. Now is the time for a determined stand—now can we make or mar ourselves. I will not resign—the King is with us—our strength shall be known. These haughty imbeciles shall fall in the trap they have dug for us.

Lumley spoke warmly, and with the confidence of a mind firmly assured of success. Lord Saxingham was moved—bright visions flashed across him—the premiership—a dukedom. Yet he was old and childless, and his honors would die with the last Lord of Saxingham?

"See," continued Lumley, "I have calculated our resources as accurately as an electioneering agent would cast up the list of voters. In the press, I have secured——and ——and; and in the Commons we have the subtle——, and the vigor of——, and the popular name of——, and all the boroughs of——; in the Cabinet we have——, and at Court you know our strength. Let us choose our moment—a sudden *coup*—an interview with the King—a statement of our conscientious scruples to this atrocious measure. I know the vain, stiff mind of the Premier; *he* will lose temper—he will tender his resignation—to his astonishment it will be accepted. You will be sent for—we will dissolve parliament—we will strain every nerve in the elections—we shall succeed, I know we shall. But be silent in the meanwhile—be cautious: let not a word escape you—let them think us beaten—lull suspicion asleep—let us lament our weakness, and hint, only hint at our resignation, but with assurances of continued support. I know how to blind them, if you leave it to me."

The weak mind of the old earl was as a puppet in the hands of his bold kinsman. He feared one moment, hoped another—now his ambition was flattered—now his sense of honor was alarmed. There was something in Lumley's intrigue to oust the the government, with which he served, that

had an appearance of cunning and baseness, of which Lord Saxingham, whose personal character was high, by no means approved. But Vargrave talked him over with consummate address, and when they parted, the earl carried his head two inches higher—he was preparing himself for his rise in life.

"That is well—that is well!" said Lumley, rubbing his hands when he was left alone; "the old driveller will be my *locum tenens*, till years and renown enable me to become his successor. Meanwhile, I shall be really what he will be in name."

Here Lord Vargrave's well-fed servant, now advanced to the dignity of own gentleman and house-steward, entered the room with a letter; it had a protentious look—it was wafered—the paper was blue, the hand clerk-like—there was no envelope—it bore its infernal origin on the face of it—IT WAS A DUN'S!

Lumley opened the letter with an impatient pshaw! The man, a silversmith (Lumley's plate was much admired!), had applied for years in vain; the amount was large—an execution was threatened!—an execution!—it is a trifle to a rich man: but no trifle to one suspected of being poor—one straining at that very moment at so high an object—one to whom public opinion was so necessary—one who knew that nothing but his title, and scarcely that, saved him from the reputation of an adventurer! He must again have recourse to the money-lenders—his small estate was long since too deeply mortgaged to afford new security. Usury, usury, again!—he knew its price, and he sighed—but what was to be done?

"It is but for a few months, a few months, and Evelyn must be mine. Saxingham has already lent me what he can; but he is embarrassed. This d—d office, what a tax it is! and the rascals say we are too well paid! I, too, who could live happy in a garret, if this purse-proud English would but allow one to exist within one's income.—My fellow-trustee, the banker, my uncle's old correspondent—ah, well thought of! He knows the conditions of the will—he knows that, at the worst, I must have thirty thousand pounds if I live a few months longer. I will go to him."

CHAPTER III.

"Animum nunc hoc celerem, nunc dividit illuc."*
—VIRGIL.

THE late Mr. Templeton had been a banker in a provincial town, which was the centre of great commercial and agricultural activity and enterprise. He had made the bulk of his fortune in the happy days of paper currency and war. Besides his country bank, he had a considerable share in a metropolitan one of some eminence. At the time of his marriage with the present Lady Vargrave he retired altogether from business, and never returned to the place in which his wealth had been amassed. He had still kept up a familiar acquaintance with the principal and senior partner of the metropolitan bank I have referred to; for he was a man who always loved to talk about money matters with those who understood them. This gentleman, Mr. Gustavus Douce, had been named, with Lumley, joint trustee to Evelyn's fortune. They had full powers to invest it in whatever stock seemed most safe or advantageous. The trustees appeared well chosen; as one, being destined to share the fortune, would have the deepest interest in its security; and the other, from his habits and profession, would be a most excellent adviser.

Of Mr. Douce, Lord Vargrave had seen but little; they were not thrown together. But Lord Vargrave, who thought every rich man might, some time or other, become a desirable acquaintance, regularly asked him once every year to dinner; and twice in return he had dined with Mr. Douce, in one of the most splendid villas, and off some of the the most splendid plate it had ever been his fortune to witness and to envy!—so that the little favor he was about to ask was but a slight return for Lord Vargrave's condescension.

He found the banker in his private sanctum—his carriage at the door—for it was just four o'clock, an hour in which Mr. Douce regularly departed to Caserta, as his aforesaid villa was somewhat affectedly styled.

Mr. Douce was a small man, a nervous man—he did not seem quite master of his own limbs: when he bowed, he seemed to be mak-

* Now this, now that, distracts the active mind.

ing you a present of his legs; when he sate down, he twitched first on one side, then on the other—thrust his hands in his pockets, then took them out, and looked at them, as if in astonishment—then seized upon a pen, by which they were luckily provided with incessant occupation. Meanwhile, there was what might fairly be called a constant play of countenance: first, he smiled, then looked grave—now raised his eyebrows, till they rose like rainbows, to the horizon of his pale, straw-colored hair—and next darted them down, like an avalanche, over the twinkling, restless, fluttering, little blue eyes, which then became almost invisible. Mr. Douce had, in fact, all the appearance of a painfully-shy man; which was the more strange, as he had the reputation of enterprise, and even audacity, in the business of his profession, and was fond of the society of the great.

"I have called on you, my dear sir," said Lord Vargrave, after the preliminary salutations, "to ask a little favor, which, if the least inconvenient, have no hesitation in refusing. You know how I am situated with regard to my ward, Miss Cameron; in a few months I hope she will be Lady Vargrave."

Mr. Douce showed three small teeth, which were all that in the front of his mouth fate had left him; and then, as if alarmed at the indelicacy of a smile upon such a subject, pushed back his chair, and twitched up his blotting-paper colored trousers.

"Yes, in a few months I hope she will be Lady Vargrave; and you know then, Mr. Douce, that I shall be in no want of money."

"I hope—that is to say, I am sure—that—I trust that never will be the ca-ca-case with your lordship," put in Mr. Douce, with timid hesitation. Mr. Douce, in addition to his other good qualities, stammered much in the delivery of his sentences.

"You are very kind, but it is the case just at present; I have great need of a few thousand pounds upon my personal security. My estate is already a little mortgaged, and I don't wish to encumber it more; besides, the loan would be merely temporary: you know, that if at the age of eighteen Miss Cameron refuse me—(a supposition out of the question, but in business we must calculate on improbabilities)—I claim the forfeit she incurs—thirty thousand pounds—you remember."

"Oh, yes—that is—upon my word—I—I don't exactly—but—your lord—l-l-l-lord-lordship knows best—I have been so—so busy—I forget the exact—hem—hem!"

"If you just turn to the will you will see it is as I say. Now, could you conveniently place a few thousands to my account, just for a short time?—But I see you don't like it. Never mind, I can get it elsewhere; only, as you were my poor uncle's friend——"

"Your lord—l-l-l-lordship is quite mistaken," said Mr. Douce, with trembling agitation; "upon my word; yes, a few thou-thou-thousands—to be sure—to be sure. Your lordship's banker is—is——"

"Drummond—disagreeable people—by no means obliging. I shall certainly change to your house when my accounts are better worth keeping."

"You do me great—great honor; I will just—step—step—step out, for a moment—and—and speak to Mr. Dobs;—not but what you may depend on—Excuse me! Morning Chron-chron-Chronicle, my lord!"

Mr. Douce rose, as if by galvanism, and ran out of the room, spinning round as he ran, to declare, again and again, that he would not be gone a moment.

"Good little fellow that—very like an electrified frog!" murmured Vargrave, as he took up the Morning Chronicle, so especially pointed out to his notice; and, turning to the leading article, read a very eloquent attack on himself. Lumley was thick-skinned on such matters—he liked to be attacked—it showed that he was up in the world.

Presently Mr. Douce returned. To Lord Vargrave's amazement and delight, he was informed that ten thousand pounds would be immediately lodged with Messrs. Drummond. His bill of promise to pay in three months—five per cent interest—was quite sufficient: three months was a short date; but the bill could be renewed on the same terms, from quarter to quarter, till quite convenient to his lordship to pay. "Would Lord Vargrave do him the honor to dine with him at Caserta next Monday?"

Lord Vargrave tried to affect apathy at his sudden accession of ready money; but, really, it almost turned his head: he griped both Mr. Douce's thin, little shivering hands, and was speechless with gratitude and ecstasy. The

sum, which doubled the utmost he expected, would relieve him from all his immediate embarrassments. When he recovered his voice, he thanked his dear Mr. Douce with a warmth that seemed to make the little man shrink into a nutshell; and assured him that he would dine with him every Monday in the year—if he was asked! He then longed to depart; but he thought, justly, that to go as soon as he had got what he wanted, would look selfish; accordingly, he reseated himself, and so did Mr. Douce, and the conversation turned upon politics and news: but Mr. Douce, who seemed to regard all things with a commercial eye, contrived, Vargrave hardly knew how, to veer round from the change in the French ministry to the state of the English money market.

"It really is indeed, my lord—I say it, I am sure, with concern, a very bad ti-ti-ti-ti-time for men in business—indeed, for all men—such poor interest in the English fu-fun-funds—and yet speculations are so unsound. I recommended my friend Sir Giles Grimsby to—to invest some money in the American canals; a most rare res-res-respons-responsibility, I may say, for me; I am cautious in—in recommending; but Sir Giles was an old friend—con-con-connection, I may say; but most providentially, all turned out—that is—fell out—as I was sure it would—thirty per cent—and the value of the sh-sh-sh-shares doubled. But such things are very rare—quite god-sends, I may say!"

"Well, Mr. Douce, whenever I have money to lay out, I must come and consult you."

"I shall be most happy at all times to—to advise your lordship; but it is not a thing I'm very fond of;—there's Miss Cameron's fortune quite l-l-locked up—three per cents and Exchequer bills;—why it might have been a mil-mil-million by this ti-ti-time, if the good old gentleman—I beg pardon—old—old nobleman, my poor dear friend, had been now alive!"

"Indeed!" said Lumley, greedily, and pricking up his ears; "he was a good manager, my uncle!"

"None better, none better. I may say a genius for busi—hem—hem! Miss Cameron a young woman of bus-bus-business, my lord?"

"Not much of that, I fear. A million, did you say?"

"At least!—indeed, at least—money so scarce—speculation so sure in America—great people the Americans—rising people—gi-gi-giants—giants!"

"I am wasting your whole morning—too bad in me," said Vargrave, as the clock struck five; "the Lords meet this evening—important business—once more a thousand thanks to you—good day."

"A very good day to you, my lord; don't mention it; glad at any time to ser-ser-serve you," said Mr. Douce, fidgeting, curveting, and prancing round Lord Vargrave, as the latter walked through the outer office to the carriage.

"Not a step more; you will catch cold. Good-by—on Monday, then, seven o'clock. ——The House of Lords."

And Lumley threw himself back in his carriage in high spirits.

CHAPTER IV.

"Oublié de Tullie, et bravé du Senat." *
—VOLTAIRE: *Brutus*, act ii., sc. i.

IN the Lords that evening the discussion was animated and prolonged—it was the last party debate of the session. The astute opposition did not neglect to bring prominently, though incidentally, forward, the question on which it was whispered that there existed some growing difference in the Cabinet. Lord Vargrave rose late; his temper was excited by the good fortune of his day's negotiation; he felt himself of more importance than usual, as a needy man is apt to do when he has got a large sum at his banker's; moreover, he was exasperated by some personal allusions to himself, which had been delivered by a dignified old lord who dated his family from the ark, and was as rich as Crœsus. Accordingly, Vargrave spoke with more than his usual vigor. His first sentences were welcomed with loud cheers—he warmed—he grew vehement—he uttered the most positive and unalterable sentiments upon the question alluded to—he greatly transgressed the discretion which the heads of his party were desirous to maintain;—instead of conciliating without compromising, he irritated, galled, *and* compromised.

* Forgotten by Tully and bullied by the Senate.

The angry cheers of the opposite party were loudly re-echoed by the cheers of the more hot-headed on his own side. The Premier and some of his colleagues observed, however, a moody silence. The Premier once took a note, and then reseated himself, and drew his hat more closely over his brows. It was an ominous sign for Lumley; but he was looking the opposition in the face, and did not observe it. He sate down in triumph; he had made a most effective and a most mischievous speech —a combination extremely common. The leader of the opposition replied to him with bitter calmness; and, when citing some of his sharp sentences, he turned to the Premier, and asked. "Are these opinions those also of the noble Lord?—I call for a reply—I have a right to demand a reply." Lumley was startled to hear the tone in which his chief uttered the comprehensive and significant "*Hear, hear!*"

At midnight the Premier wound up the debate. His speech was short, and characterized by moderation. He came to the question put to him—the House was hushed—you might have heard a pin drop—the Commoners behind the throne pressed forward with anxiety and eagerness on their countenances.

"I am called upon," said the minister, "to declare if those sentiments, uttered by my noble friend, are mine also, as the chief adviser of the Crown. My Lords, in the heat of debate, every word is not to be scrupulously weighed, and rigidly interpreted." ("Hear, hear," ironically from the opposition—approvingly from the Treasury benches). "My noble friend will doubtless be anxious to explain what he intended to say. I hope, nay, I doubt not, that his explanation will be satisfactory to the noble lord, to the House, and to the Country. But since I am called upon for a distinct reply to a distinct interrogatory, I will say at once, that if those sentiments be rightly interpreted by the noble lord who spoke last, those sentiments are not mine, and will never animate the conduct of any Cabinet of which I am a member." (Long continued cheering from the opposition). "At the same time, I am convinced that my noble friend's meaning has not been rightly construed; and till I hear from himself to the contrary, I will venture to state what I think he designed to convey to your Lordships." Here the Premier, with a tact that nobody could be duped by, but every one could admire, stripped Lord Vargrave's unlucky sentences of every syllable that could give offence to any one; and left the pointed epigrams and vehement denunciations a most harmless arrangement of common-place.

The House was much excited; there was a call for Lord Vargrave, and Lord Vargrave promptly rose. It was one of those dilemmas out of which Lumley was just the man to extricate himself with address. There was so much manly frankness in his manner—there was so much crafty subtlety in his mind! He complained, with proud and honest bitterness, of the construction that had been forced upon his words by the opposition. "If," he added (and no man knew better the rhetorical effect of the *tu quoque* form of argument),—"if every sentence uttered by the noble lord opposite in his zeal for liberty, had, in days now gone by, been construed with equal rigor, or perverted with equal ingenuity, that noble lord had long since been prosecuted as an incendiary, perhaps executed as a traitor!" Vehement cheers from the ministerial benches; cries of "Order!" from the opposition. A military lord rose to order, and appealed to the Woolsack.

Lumley sate down, as if chafed at the interruption;—he had produced the effect he had desired—he had changed the public question at issue into a private quarrel: a new excitement was created—dust was thrown into the eyes of the House. Several speakers rose to accommodate matters; and, after half-an-hour of public time had been properly wasted, the noble lord on one side and the noble lord on the other duly explained;—paid each other the highest possible compliments, and Lumley was left to conclude his vindication, which now seemed a comparatively flat matter after the late explosion. He completed his task so as to satisfy, apparently, all parties—for all parties were now tired of the thing, and wanted to go to bed. But the next morning there were whispers about the town—articles in the different papers, evidently by authority—rejoicings among the opposition—and a general feeling, that, though the Government might keep together that session, its dissessions would break out before the next meeting of parliament.

As Lumley was wrapping himself in his cloak after this stormy debate, the Marquess of Raby—a peer of large possessions, and one who entirely agreed with Lumley's views—came up to him, and proposed that they should go home together in Lord Raby's carriage. Vargrave willingly consented, and dismissed his own servants.

"You did that admirably, my dear Vargrave!" said Lord Raby, when they were seated in the carriage. "I quite coincide in all your sentiments; I declare my blood boiled when I heard * * * * (the Premier) appear half inclined to throw you over. Your hit upon * * * * * was first-rate—he will not get over it for a month; and you extricated yourself well."

"I am glad you approve my conduct—it comforts me," said Vargrave, feelingly; "at the same time I see all the consequences: but I can brave all for the sake of character and conscience."

"I feel just as you do!" replied Lord Raby, with some warmth; "and if I thought that * * * * meant to yield this question, I should certainly oppose his administration."

Vargrave shook his head, and held his tongue, which gave Lord Raby a high idea of his discretion.

After a few more observations on political matters, Lord Raby invited Lumley to pay him a visit at his country-seat.

"I am going to Knaresdean next Monday; you know we have races in the park—and really they are sometimes good sport: at all events, it is a very pretty sight. There will be nothing in the Lords now—the recess is just at hand; and if you can spare the time, Lady Raby and myself will be delighted to see you."

"You may be sure, my dear Lord, I cannot refuse your invitation; indeed, I intended to visit your county next week. You know, perhaps, a Mr. Merton?"

"Charles Merton?—to be sure—most respectable man—capital fellow—the best parson in the county—no cant, but thoroughly orthodox;—he certainly keeps in his brother, who, though a very active member, is what I call a waverer on certain questions. Have you known Merton long?"

"I don't know him at all as yet—my acquaintance is with his wife and daughter,—a very fine girl, by the by. My ward, Miss Cameron, is staying with them."

"Miss Cameron!—Cameron!—ah!—I understand; I think I have heard that—but gossip does not always tell the truth!"

Lumley smiled significantly, and the carriage now stopped at his door.

"Perhaps you will take a seat in our carriage on Monday?" said Lord Raby.

"Monday?—unhappily I am engaged; but on Tuesday your lordship may expect me."

"Very well—the races begin on Wednesday: we shall have a full house—good night!"

CHAPTER V.

"Homunculi quanti sunt, cûm recogito." *
—PLAUTUS

IT is obvious that, for many reasons, we must be brief upon the political intrigue in which the scheming spirit of Lord Vargrave was employed. It would, indeed, be scarcely possible to preserve the necessary medium between too plain a revelation, and too complex a disguise. It suffices, therefore, very shortly to repeat what the reader has already gathered from what has gone before—namely, that the question at issue was one which has happened often enough in all governments—one on which the Cabinet was divided, and in which the weaker party was endeavoring to out-trick the stronger.

The malcontents, forseeing that sooner or later the head of the gathering must break, were again divided among themselves whether to resign or to stay in, and strive to force a resignation on their dissentient colleagues. The richer and the more honest were for the former course; the poorer and the more dependent for the latter. We have seen that the latter policy was that espoused and recommended by Vargrave—(who, though not in the Cabinet, always contrived somehow or other to worm out its secrets)—at the same time, he by no means rejected the other string to his bow. If it were possible so to arrange and to strengthen his faction, that, by the *coup d'état* of a sudden resignation in a formidable body,

* When I reflect, how great your little men are in their own consideration.

the whole government might be broken up, and a new one formed from among the resignees, it would obviously be the best plan. But then Lord Vargrave was doubtful of his own strength, and fearful to play into the hands of his colleagues, who might be able to stand even better without himself and his allies, and, by conciliating the opposition, take a step onward in political movement, which might leave Vargrave placeless and powerless for years to come.

He repented his own rashness in the recent debate, which was, indeed, a premature boldness that had sprung out of momentary excitement—for the craftiest orator must be indiscreet sometimes. He spent the next few days in alternately seeking to explain away to one party, and to sound, unite, and consolidate the other. His attempts in the one quarter were received by the Premier with the cold politeness of an offended but careful statesman, who believed just as much as he chose, and preferred taking his own opportunity for a breach with a subordinate, to risking any imprudence by the gratification of resentment. In the last quarter, the penetrating adventurer saw that his ground was more insecure than he had anticipated. He perceived in dismay and secret rage, that many of those most loud in his favor while he was with the Government would desert him the soonest if thrown out. Liked as a subordinate minister, he was viewed with very different eyes the moment it was a question, whether, instead of cheering his sentiments, men should trust themselves to his guidance. Some did not wish to displease the Government; others did not seek to weaken, but to correct them. One of his stanchest allies in the Commons was a candidate for a peerage—another suddenly remembered that he was second cousin to the Premier;—some laughed at the idea of a puppet premier in Lord Saxingham—others insinuated to Vargrave that he himself was not precisely of that standing in the country which would command respect to a new party, of which, if not the head, he would be the mouthpiece;—for themselves they knew, admired, and trusted him; but those d—d country gentlemen—and the dull public!

Alarmed, wearied, and disgusted, the schemer saw himself reduced to submission, for the present at least; and more than ever he felt the necessity of Evelyn's fortune to fall back upon, if the chance of the cards should rob him of his salary. He was glad to escape for a breathing while from the vexations and harassments that beset him, and looked forward with the eager interest of a sanguine and elastic mind—always escaping from one scheme to another—to his excursion into B——shire.

At the villa of Mr. Douce, Lord Vargrave met a young nobleman who had just succeeded to a property not only large and unencumbered, but of a nature to give him importance in the eyes of politicians. Situated in a very small county, the estates of Lord Doltimore secured to his nomination at least one of the representatives, while a little village at the back of his pleasure-grounds constituted a borough and returned two members to parliament. Lord Doltimore, just returned from the Continent, had not even taken his seat in the Lords; and though his family connections, such as they were—and they were not very high, and by no means in the fashion—were ministerial, his own opinions were as yet unrevealed.

To this young nobleman Lord Vargrave was singularly attentive; he was well formed to attract men younger than himself; and he eminently succeeded in his designs upon Lord Doltimore's affection.

His lordship was a small pale man, with a very limited share of understanding, supercilious in manner, elaborate in dress, not ill-natured *au fond*, and with much of the English gentleman in his disposition;—that is, he was honorable in his ideas and actions, whenever his natural dullness and neglected education enabled him clearly to perceive (through the midst of prejudices, the delusions of others, and the false lights of the dissipated society in which he had lived), what was right and what wrong. But his leading characteristics were vanity and conceit. He had lived much with younger sons, cleverer than himself, who borrowed his money, sold him their horses, and won from him at cards. In return, they gave him all the species of flattery which young men *can* give with so hearty an appearance of cordial admiration. "You certainly have the best horses in Paris.—You are really a devilish good fellow, Doltimore. Oh, do you know, Doltimore, what little *Désiré* says of you! You have certainly turned the girl's head."

This sort of adulation from one sex was not

corrected by any great acerbity from the other. Lord Doltimore, at the age of twenty-two, was a very good *parti;* and, whatever his other deficiencies, he had sense enough to perceive that he received much greater attention—whether from opera-dancers in search of a friend, or virtuous young ladies in search of a husband—than any of the companions, good-looking though many of them were, with whom he had habitually lived.

"You will not long remain in town now the season is over?" said Vargrave, as after dinner he found himself, by the departure of the ladies, next to Lord Doltimore.

"No, indeed; even in the season, I don't much like London. Paris has rather spoiled me for any other place."

"Paris is certainly very charming—the ease of French life has a fascination that our formal ostentation wants. Nevertheless, to a man like you, London must have many attractions."

"Why, I have a good many friends here; but still, after Ascot, it rather bores me."

"Have you any horses on the turf?"

"Not yet; but Legard (you know Legard, perhaps—a very good fellow) is anxious that I should try my luck. I was very fortunate in the races at Paris—you know we have established racing there. The French take to it quite naturally."

"Ah, indeed!—it is so long since I have been in Paris—most exciting amusement! *A propos* of races—I am going down to Lord Raby's to-morrow; I think I saw in one of the morning papers, that you had very largely backed a horse entered at Knaresdean."

"Yes, Thunderer—I think of buying Thunderer. Legard—Colonel Legard—(he was in the Guards, but he sold out)—is a good judge, and recommends the purchase. How very odd that you too should be going to Knaresdean!"

"Odd, indeed, but most lucky!—we can go together, if you are not better engaged."

Lord Doltimore colored and hesitated. On the one hand, he was a little afraid of being alone with so clever a man; on the other hand, it was an honor—it was something for him to talk of to Legard. Nevertheless, the shyness got the better of the vanity—he excused himself—he feared he was engaged to take down Legard.

Lumley smiled, and changed the conversation; and so agreeable did he make himself, that when the party broke up, and Lumley had just shaken hands with his host, Doltimore came to him, and said in a little confusion—

"I think I can put off Legard—if—if you"——

"That's delightful!—What time shall we start?—need not get down much before dinner—one o'clock?"

"Oh, yes!—not too long before dinner—one o'clock will be a little too early."

"Two, then. Where are you staying?"

"At Fenton's."

"I will call for you—good night!—I long to see Thunderer!"

CHAPTER VI.

'La santé de l'âme n'est pas plus assurée que celle du corps; et quoique l'on paraisee éloigné des passions, on n'est pas moins en danger de s'y laisser emporter, que de tomber malade quand on se porte bien." *

—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

IN spite of the efforts of Maltravers to shun all occasions of meeting Evelyn, they were necessarily sometimes thrown together in the round of provincial hospitalities; and, certainly, if either Mr. Merton or Caroline (the shrewder observer of the two) had ever formed any suspicion that Evelyn had made a conquest of Maltravers, his manner at such times effectually removed it.

Maltravers was a man to feel deeply; but no longer a boy to yield to every tempting impulse. I have said that FORTITUDE was his favorite virtue—but fortitude is the virtue of great and rare occasions; there was another, equally hard-favored and unshowy, which he took as the staple of active and every-day duties—and that virtue was JUSTICE. Now, in earlier life, he had been enamoured of the conventional Florimel that we call HONOR—a shifting and shadowy phantom, that is but the reflex of the opinion of the time and clime. But justice has in it something permament and solid; and out of justice arises the real, not the false honor.

* The health of the soul is not more sure than that of the body, and although we may appear free from passions, there is not the less danger of their attack, than of falling sick, at the moment we are well.

"Honor!" said Maltravers—"honor is to justice as the flower to the plant—its efflorescence, its bloom, its consummation! But honor that does not spring from justice is but a piece of painted rag, an artificial rose, which the men-milliners of society would palm upon us as more natural than the true."

This principle of justice Maltravers sought to carry out in all things—not, perhaps, with constant success; for what practice can always embody theory?—but still, at least, his endeavor at success was constant. This, perhaps, it was which had ever kept him from the excesses to which exuberant and liberal natures are prone—from the extravagancies of pseudo-genius.

"No man," for instance, he was wont to say, "can be embarrassed in his own circumstances, and not cause embarrassment to others. Without economy, who can be just? And what are charity—generosity—but the poetry and the beauty of justice?"

No man ever asked Maltravers twice for a just debt; and no man ever once asked him to fulfil a promise. You felt that, come what would, you might rely upon his word. To him might have been applied the witty eulogium passed by Johnson upon a certain nobleman:—"If he had promised you an acorn, and the acorn-season failed in England, he would have sent to Norway for one!"

It was not, therefore, the mere Norman and chivalrous spirit of honor, which he had worshipped in youth as a part of the Beautiful and Becoming, but which in youth had yielded to temptation, as a *sentiment* ever must yield to a passion—but it was the more hard, stubborn, and reflective *principle*, which was the later growth of deeper and nobler wisdom, that regulated the conduct of Maltravers in this crisis of his life. Certain it is, that he had never but once loved as he loved Evelyn; and yet that he never yielded so little to the passion.

"If engaged to another," thought he, "that engagement it is not for a third person to attempt to dissolve. I am the last to form a right judgment of the strength or weakness of the bonds which unite her to Vargrave—for my emotions would prejudice me despite myself. I may fancy that her betrothed is not worthy of her—but that is for her to decide. While the bond lasts, who can be justified in tempting her to break it?"

Agreeably to these notions, which the world may, perhaps, consider over-strained, whenever Maltravers met Evelyn, he entrenched himself in a rigid and almost a chilling formality. How difficult this was with one so simple and ingenuous! Poor Evelyn! she thought she had offended him—she longed to ask him her offence—perhaps, in her desire to rouse his genius into exertion, she had touched some secret sore, some latent wound of the memory? She recalled all their conversations again and again. Ah! why could they not be renewed? Upon her fancy and her thoughts Maltravers had made an impression not to be obliterated. She wrote more frequently than ever to Lady Vargrave, and the name of Maltravers was found in every page of her correspondence.

One evening at the house of a neighbor, Miss Cameron (with the Mertons) entered the room almost in the same instant as Maltravers. The party was small, and so few had yet arrived, that it was impossible for Maltravers, without marked rudeness, to avoid his friends from the rectory; and Mrs. Merton, placing herself next to Evelyn, graciously motioned to Maltravers to occupy the third vacant seat on the sofa, of which she filled the centre.

"We grudge all your improvements, Mr. Maltravers, since they cost us your society. But we know that our dull circle must seem tame to one who has seen so much. However, we expect to offer you an inducement soon in Lord Vargrave. What a lively, agreeable person he is!"

Maltravers raised his eyes to Evelyn, calmly and penetratingly, at the latter part of this speech. He observed that she turned pale, and sighed involuntarily.

"He had great spirits when I knew him," said he; "and he had then less cause to make him happy."

Mrs. Merton smiled, and turned rather pointedly towards Evelyn.

Maltravers continued—"I never met the late lord. He had none of the vivacity of his nephew, I believe."

"I have heard that he was very severe," said Mrs. Merton, lifting her glass towards a party that had just entered.

"Severe!" exclaimed Evelyn. "Ah, if you could have known him—the kindest—the most

indulgent—no one ever loved me as he did." She paused, for she felt her lip quiver.

"I beg your pardon, my dear," said Mrs. Merton, coolly. Mrs. Merton had no idea of the pain inflicted by *treading upon a feeling*. Maltravers was touched, and Mrs. Merton went on. "No wonder he was kind to you, Evelyn—a brute would be that; but he was generally considered a stern man."

"I never saw a stern look—I never heard a harsh word; nay, I do not remember that he ever even used the word 'command,'" said Evelyn, almost angrily.

Mrs. Merton was about to reply, when, suddenly, seeing a lady whose little girl had been ill of the measles, her motherly thoughts flowed into a new channel, and she fluttered away in that sympathy which unites all the heads of a growing family. Evelyn and Maltravers were left alone.

"You do not remember your father, I believe?" said Maltravers.

"No father but Lord Vargrave; while he lived, I never knew the loss of one."

"Does your mother resemble you?"

"Ah, I wish I could think so; it is the sweetest countenance!"

"Have you no picture of her?"

"None—she would never consent to sit."

"Your father was a Cameron; I have known some of that name."

"No relations of ours: my mother says we have none living."

"And have we no chance of seeing Lady Vargrave in B——shire?"

"She never leaves home; but I hope to return soon to Brook Green."

Maltravers sighed, and the conversation took a new turn.

"I have to thank you for the books you so kindly sent—I ought to have returned them ere this," said Evelyn.

"I have no use for them. Poetry has lost its charm for me; especially that species of poetry which unites with the method and symmetry something of the coldness of Art. How did you like Alfieri?"

"His language is a kind of Spartan French," answered Evelyn, in one of those happy expressions which every now and then showed the quickness of her natural talent.

"Yes," said Maltravers, smiling; "the criticism is acute. Poor Alfieri!—in his wild life and his stormy passions, he threw out all the redundance of his genius; and his poetry is but the representative of his thoughts—not his emotions. Happier the man of genius who lives upon his reason, and wastes feeling only on his verse!"

"You do not think that we *waste* feeling upon human beings?" said Evelyn, with a pretty laugh.

"Ask me that question when you have reached my years, and can look upon fields on which you have lavished your warmest hopes—your noblest aspirations—your tenderest affections—and see the soil all profitless and barren. 'Set not your heart on the things of earth,' saith the Preacher."

Evelyn was affected by the tone, the words, and the melancholy countenance of the speaker.

"You, of all men, ought not to think thus," said she, with a sweet eagerness: "you have done so much to awaken and to soften the heart in others—you—who—" she stopped short, and added, more gravely, "Ah, Mr. Maltravers, I cannot reason with you, but I can hope you will refute your own philosophy."

"Were your wish fulfilled," answered Maltravers, almost with sternness, and with an expression of great pain in his compressed lips, "I should have to thank you for much misery." He rose abruptly, and turned away.

"How have I offended him?" thought Evelyn, sorrowfully; "I never speak but to wound him—what *have* I done?"

She could have wished, in her simple kindness, to follow him, and make peace; but he was now in a coterie of strangers; and shortly afterwards he left the room, and she did not see him again for weeks.

CHAPTER VII.

"Nihil est aliud magnum quam multa minuta." *
—Vet. Auct.

An anxious event disturbed the smooth current of cheerful life at Merton Rectory. One morning when Evelyn came down she missed little Sophy, who had contrived to establish for herself the undisputed privilege of a stool beside Miss Cameron at breakfast.

* There is nothing so great, as the collection of the minute.

Mrs. Merton appeared with a graver face than usual. Sophy was unwell, was feverish; the scarlet fever had been in the neighborhood; Mrs. Merton was very uneasy.

"It is the more unlucky, Caroline," added the mother, turning to Miss Merton, "because to-morrow, you know, we were to have spent a few days at Knaresdean to see the races. If poor Sophy does not get better, I fear you and Miss Cameron must go without me. I can send to Mrs. Hare to be your chaperon; she would be delighted."

"Poor Sophy!" said Caroline; "I am very sorry to hear she is unwell; but I think Taylor would take great care of her; you surely need not stay, unless she is much worse."

Mrs. Merton, who, tame as she seemed, was a fond and attentive mother, shook her head and said nothing: but Sophy was much worse before noon. The doctor was sent for, and pronounced it to be the scarlet fever.

It was now necessary to guard against the infection. Caroline had had the complaint, and she willingly shared in her mother's watch of love for two or three hours. Mrs. Merton gave up the party. Mrs. Hare (the wife of a rich squire in the neighborhood) was written to, and that lady willingly agreed to take charge of Caroline and her friend.

Sophy had been left asleep. When Mrs. Merton returned to her bed, she found Evelyn quietly stationed there. This alarmed her, for Evelyn had never had the scarlet fever, and had been forbidden the sick room. But poor little Sophy had waked and querulously asked for her dear Evy; and Evy, who had been hovering round the room, heard the inquiry from the garrulous nurse, and come in she would, and the child gazed at her so beseechingly when Mrs. Merton entered, and said so piteously, "Don't take Evy away," that Evelyn stoutly declared that she was not the least afraid of infection, and stay she must. Nay, her share in the nursing would be the more necessary, since Caroline was to go to Knaresdean the next day.

"But you go, too my dear Miss Cameron?"

"Indeed I could not, I don't care for races, I never wished to go; I would much sooner have stayed; and I am sure Sophy will not get well without me—will you, dear?"

"Oh, yes, yes—if I'm to keep you from the nice races—I should be worse if I thought that."

"But I dont't like the nice races, Sophy, as your sister Carry does; she must go; they can't do without her;—but nobody knows me, so I shall not be missed."

"I can't hear of such a thing," said Mrs. Merton, with tears in her eyes; and Evelyn said no more then;—but the next morning Sophy was still worse, and the mother was too anxious and too sad to think more of ceremony and politeness,—so Evelyn stayed.

A momentary pang shot across Evelyn's breast when all settled; but she suppressed the sigh which accompanied the thought that she had lost the only opportunity she might have for weeks of seeing Maltravers; to that chance she had indeed looked forward, with interest and timid pleasure,—the chance was lost—but why should it vex her—what was he to her?

Caroline's heart smote her, as she came into the room in her lilac bonnet and new dress; and little Sophy, turning on her, eyes which, though languid, still expressed a child's pleasure at the sight of finery, exclaimed, "How nice and pretty you look, Carry!—do take Evy with you—Evy looks pretty to!"

Caroline kissed the child in silence, and paused irresolute; glanced at her dress, and then at Evelyn, who smiled on her without a thought of envy; and she had half a mind to say too, when her mother entered with a letter from Lord Vargrave. It was short: he should be at the Knaresdean races—hoped to meet them there, and accompany them home. This information re-decided Caroline, while it rewarded Evelyn. In a few minutes more Mrs. Hare arrived; and Caroline, glad to escape, perhaps, her own compunction, hurried into the carriage, with a hasty "God bless you all!—don't fret—I'm sure she will be well to-morrow—and mind, Evelyn, you don't catch the fever!"

Mr. Merton looked grave and sighed, as he handed her into the carriage; but when, seated there, she turned round and kissed her hand at him, she looked so handsome and distinguished, that a sentiment of paternal pride smoothed down his vexation at her want of feeling. He himself gave up the visit; but a little time after, when Sophy fell into a tranquil sleep, he thought he might venture to canter

across the country to the race-ground, and return to dinner.

Days—nay, a whole week passed—the races were over—but Caroline had not returned. Meanwhile Sophy's fever left her; she could quit her bed—her room—she could come down stairs again—and the family was happy. It is astonishing how the least ailment in those little things stops the wheels of domestic life! Evelyn fortunately had not caught the fever: she was pale, and somewhat reduced by fatigue and confinement: but she was amply repaid by the mother's swimming look of quiet gratitude—the father's pressure of the hand—Sophy's recovery—and her own good heart. They had heard twice from Caroline, putting off her return:—Lady Raby was so kind, she could not get away till the party broke up;—she was so glad to hear such an account of Sophy.

Lord Vargrave had not yet arrived at the rectory to stay; but he had twice ridden over, and remained there some hours. He exerted himself to the utmost to please Evelyn; and she—who, deceived by his manners, and influenced by the recollections of long and familiar acquaintance, was blinded to his real character—reproached herself more bitterly than ever for her repugnance to his suit and her ungrateful hesitation to obey the wishes of her stepfather.

To the Mertons, Lumley spoke with good-natured praise of Caroline; she was so much admired; she was the beauty at Knaresdean. A certain young friend of his, Lord Doltimore, was evidently smitten. The parents thought much over the ideas conjured up by that last sentence.

One morning, the garrulous Mrs. Hare—the gossip of the neighborhood—called at the rectory; she had returned, two days before, from Knaresdean; and she, too, had her tale to tell of Caroline's conquests.

"I assure you, my dear Mrs. Merton, if we had not all known that his heart was pre-occupied, we should have thought that Lord Vargrave was her warmest admirer. Most charming man, Lord Vargrave!—but as for Lord Doltimore, it was quite a flirtation. Excuse *me*—no scandal, you know, ha, ha!—a fine young man, but stiff and reserved—not the fascination of Lord Vargrave."

"Does Lord Raby return to town, or is he now at Knaresdean for the autumn?"

"He goes on Friday, I believe: very few of the guests are left now. Lady A., and Lord B., and Lord Vargrave and your daughter, and Mr. Legard, and Lord Doltimore, and Mrs. and the Misses Cipher;—all the rest went the same day I did."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Merton, in some surprise.

"Ah, I read your thoughts: you wonder that Miss Caroline has not come back—is not that it? But perhaps Lord Doltimore—ha, ha!—no scandal now—do excuse *me!*"

"Was Mr. Maltravers at Knaresdean?" asked Mrs. Merton, anxious to change the subject, and unprepared with any other question. Evelyn was cutting out a paper horse for Sophy, who—all her high spirits flown—was lying on the sofa, and wistfully following her fairy fingers—"Naughty Evy, you have cut off the horse's head!"

"Mr. Maltravers—no, I think not; no, he was not there. Lord Raby asked him pointedly to come, and was, I know, much disappointed that he did not. But *àpropos* of Mr. Maltravers: I met him nor a quarter of hour ago, this morning, as I was coming to you. You know we have leave to come through his park, and as I was in the park at the time, I stopped the carriage to speak to him. I told him that I was coming here, and that you had had the scarlet fever in the house, which was the reason you had not gone to the races; and he turned quite pale, and seemed so alarmed. I said we were all afraid that Miss Cameron should catch it; and, excuse me—ha, ha!—no scandal, I hope—but——"

"Mr. Maltravers," said the butler, throwing open the door.

Maltravers entered with a quick and even a hurried step; he stopped short when he saw Evelyn; and his whole countenance was instantly lightened up by a joyous expression, which as suddenly died away.

"This is kind, indeed," said Mrs. Merton; "it is so long since we have seen you."

"I have been very much occupied," muttered Maltravers, almost inaudibly, and seated himself next to Evelyn. "I only just heard—that—that you had sickness in the house—Miss Cameron, you look pale—you—you have not suffered, I hope?"

"No—I am quite well," said Evelyn, with a smile; and she felt happy that her friend was kind to her once more.

"It's only me, Mr. Ernest," said Sophy; "you have forgot me!"

Maltravers hastened to vindicate himself from the charge, and Sophy and he were soon made excellent friends again.

Mrs. Hare, whom surprise at this sudden meeting had hitherto silenced, and who longed to shape into elegant periphrasis the common adage, "Talk of, etc.," now once more opened her budget. She tattled on: first to one, then to the other, then to all; till she had tattled herself out of breath; and then the orthodox half-hour had expired, and the bell was rung, and the carriage ordered, and Mrs. Hare rose to depart.

"Do just come to the door, Mrs. Merton," said she, "and look at my pony-phaeton, it is so pretty—Lady Raby admires it so much; you ought to have just such another." As she spoke, she favored Mrs. Merton with a significant glance, that said, as plainly as glance could say, "I have something to communicate." Mrs. Merton took the hint, and followed the good lady out of the room.

"Do you know, my dear Mrs. Merton," said Mrs. Hare, in a whisper, when they were safe in the billiard-room, that interposed between the apartment they had left and the hall; "do you know whether Lord Vargrave and Mr. Maltravers are very good friends?"

"No, indeed: why do you ask?"

"Oh, because when I was speaking to Lord Vargrave about him, he shook his head; and really I don't remember what his lordship said; but he seemed to speak as if there was a little soreness. And then he inquired very anxiously, if Mr. Maltravers was much at the rectory! and looked discomposed when he found you were such near neighbors. You'll excuse *me*, you know—ha, ha!—but we're such old friends!—and if Lord Vargrave is coming to stay here, it might be unpleasant to meet—you'll excuse *me*. I took the liberty to tell him, he need not be jealous of Mr. Maltravers—ha, ha!—not a marrying man at all. But I did think Miss Caroline was the attraction—you'll excuse me—no scandal—ha, ha! But, after all, Lord Doltimore must be the man;—well, good morning. I thought I'd just give you this hint. Is not the phaeton pretty? Kind compiments to Mr. Merton."

And the lady drove off.

During this confabulation, Maltravers and Evelyn were left alone with Sophy. Maltravers had continued to lean over the child, and appeared listening to her prattle; while Evelyn, having risen to shake hands with Mrs. Hare, did not reseat herself, but went to the window, and busied herself with a flower-stand in the recess.

"Oh, very fine, Mr. Ernest," said Sophy (always pronouncing that proper name as if it ended in *th*), "you care very much for us to stay away so long—don't he, Evy? I've a great mind not to speak to you, sir, that I have!"

"That would be too heavy a punishment, Miss Sophy—only, luckily, it would punish yourself; you could not live without talking—talk—talk—talk!"

"But I might never have talked more, Mr. Ernest, if mamma and pretty Evy had not been so kind to me;" and the child shook her head mournfully, as if she had *pitié de soi-même*. "But you won't stay away so long again, will you? Sophy play to-morrow—come to-morrow, and swing Sophy—no nice swinging since you've been gone."

While Sophy spoke, Evelyn turned half round, as if to hear Maltravers answer; he hesitated and Evelyn spoke——

"You must not tease Mr. Maltravers so: Mr. Maltravers has too much to do to come to us."

Now this was a very pettish speech in Evelyn, and her cheek glowed while she spoke; but an arch, provoking smile was on her lips.

"It can be a privation only to me, Miss Cameron," said Maltravers, rising, and attempting in vain to resist the impulse that drew him towards the window. The reproach in her tone and words at once pained and delighted him; and then this scene—the suffering child—brought back to him his first interview with Evelyn herself. He forgot, for the moment, the lapse of time—the new ties she had formed—his own resolutions.

"That is a bad compliment to us," answered Evelyn ingenuously; "do you think we are so little worthy your society as not to value it? But, perhaps" (she added, sinking her voice)

"perhaps you have been offended—perhaps I—I—said—something that—that hurt you!"

"You!" repeated Maltravers, with emotion.

Sophy, who had been attentively listening, here put in—"Shake hands and make it up with Evy—you've been quarrelling, naughty Ernest!"

Evelyn laughed, and tossed back her sunny ringlets. "I think Sophy is right," said she with enchanting simplicity; "let us make it up;" and she held out her hand to Maltravers.

Maltravers pressed the fair hand to his lips. "Alas!" said he, affected with various feelings which gave a tremor to his deep voice, "your only fault is, that your society makes me discontented with my solitary home; and as solitude must be my fate in life, I seek to enure myself to it betimes."

Here, whether opportunely or not, it is for the reader to decide—Mrs. Merton returned to the room.

She apologized for her absence—talked of Mrs. Hare, and the little Master Hares—fine boys, but noisy; and then she asked Maltravers if he had seen Lord Vargrave since his lordship had been in the county.

Maltravers replied with coldness, that he had not had that honor; that Vargrave had called on him in his way from the rectory the other day, but that he was from home, and that he had not seen him for some years.

"He is a person of most prepossessing manners," said Mrs. Merton."

"Certainly—most propossessing."

"And very clever."

"He has great talents."

"He seems most amiable."

Maltravers bowed, and glanced towards Evelyn, whose face, however, was turned from him.

The turn the conversation had taken was painful to the visitor, and he rose to depart.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Merton, "you will meet Lord Vargrave at dinner to-morrow; he will stay with us a few days—as long as he can be spared."

Maltravers meet Lord Vargrave!—the happy Vargrave!—the betrothed to Evelyn!—Maltravers witness the familiar rights—the enchanting privileges accorded to another!—and that other one whom he could not believe worthy of Evelyn! He writhed at the picture the invitation conjured up.

"You are very kind, my dear Mrs. Merton, but I expect a visitor at Burleigh—an old and dear friend, Mr. Cleveland."

"Mr. Cleveland!—we shall be delighted to see him too. We knew him many years ago, during your minority, when he used to visit Burleigh two or three times a-year."

"He is changed since then; he is often an invalid. I fear I cannot answer for him; but he will call as soon as he arrives, and apologize for himself."

Maltravers then hastily took his departure. He would not trust himself to do more than bow distantly to Evelyn;—she looked at him reproachfully. So, then, it was really premeditated and resolved upon—his absence from the rectory—and why?—she was grieved—she was offended—but more grieved than offended—perhaps because esteem, interest, admiration, are more tolerant and charitable than Love!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"*Arethusa.* 'Tis well, my lord, you're courting of ladies.

* * * * *

Claremont. Sure this lady has a good turn done her against her will.—PHILASTER.

IN the breakfast-room at Knaresdean, the same day, and almost at the same hour, in which occurred the scene and conversation at the rectory recorded in our last chapter, sate Lord Vargrave and Caroline alone. The party had dispersed, as was usual, at noon. They heard at a distance the sounds of the billiard balls. Lord Doltimore was playing with Colonel Legard, one of the best players in Europe, but who, fortunately for Doltimore, had, of late, made it a rule never to play for money. Mrs. and the Misses Cipher, and most of the guests, were in the billiard-room looking on. Lady Raby was writing letters, and Lord Raby riding over his home farm. Caroline and Lumley had been for some time in close and earnest conversation. Miss Merton was seated in a large arm-chair, much moved, with her handkerchief to her eyes. Lord Vargrave with his back to the chimney-

piece, was bending down, and speaking in a very low voice, while his quick eye glanced, ever and anon, from the lady's countenance to the windows—to the doors, to be prepared against any interruption.

"No, my dear friend," said he, "believe me that I am sincere. My feelings for you are, indeed, such as no words can paint."

"Then why——"

"Why wish you wedded to another—why wed another myself? Caroline, I have often before explained to you that we are in this the victims of an inevitable fate. It is absolutely necessary that I should wed Miss Cameron. I never deceived you from the first. I should have loved her,—my heart would have accompanied my hand, but for your too seductive beauty,—your superior mind!—yes, Caroline, your mind attracted me more than your beauty. Your mind seemed kindred to my own—inspired with the proper and wise ambition which regards the fools of the world as puppets—as counters—as chessmen. For myself, a very angel from heaven could not make me give up the great game of life!—yield to my enemies—slip from the ladder—unravel the web I have woven! Share my heart—my friendship—my schemes! this is the true and dignified affection that should exist between minds like ours; all the rest is the prejudice of children."

"Vargrave, I am ambitious—worldly: I own it, but I could give up all for you!"

"You think so, for you do not know the sacrifice. You see me now apparently rich—in power—courted; and this fate you are willing to share;—and this fate you *should* share, were it the real one I could bestow on you. But reverse the medal. Deprived of office—fortune gone—debts pressing—destitution notorious—the ridicule of embarrassments—the disrepute attached to poverty and defeated ambition—an exile in some foreign town on the poor pension to which alone I should be entitled—a mendicant on the public purse; and that, too, so eat into by demands and debts, that there is not a grocer in the next market-town who would envy the income of the retired minister! Retire, fallen—despised, in the prime of life—in the zenith of my hopes! Suppose that I could bear this for myself—could I bear it for you? *You*, born to be the ornament of courts! and you,—could you see me thus? life embittered—career lost—and feel, generous as you are, that your love had entailed on me—on us both—on our children—this miserable lot! Impossible, Caroline! we are too wise for such romance. It is not because we love too little, but because our love is worthy of each other, that we disdain to make love a curse! We cannot wrestle against the world, but we may shake hands with it, and worm the miser out of its treasures. My heart must be ever yours—my hand must be Miss Cameron's. Money I must have!—my whole career depends on it. It is literally with me the highwayman's choice—money or life."

Vargrave paused, and took Caroline's hand.

"I cannot reason with you," said she; "you know the strange empire you have obtained over me, and, certainly, in spite of all that has passed (and Caroline turned pale) I could bear anything rather than that you should hereafter reproach me for selfish disregard of your interests—your just ambition."

"My noble friend! I do not say that I shall not feel a deep and sharp pang at seeing you wed another,—but I shall be consoled by the thought that I have assisted to procure for you a station worthier of your merits than that which I can offer. Lord Doltimore is rich—you will teach him to employ his riches well—he is weak—your intellect will govern him; he is in love—your beauty will suffice to preserve his regard. Ah, we shall be dear friends to the last!"

More—but to the same effect—did this able and crafty villain continue to address Caroline, whom he alternately soothed, irritated, flattered, and revolted. Love him she certainly did, as far as love in her could extend; but perhaps his rank, his reputation, had served to win her affection; and, not knowing his embarrassments, she had encouraged a worldly hope, that if Evelyn should reject his hand it might be offered to her. Under this impression she had trifled—she had coquetted—she had played with the serpent till it had coiled around her—and she could not escape its fascination and its folds. She was sincere—she could have resigned much for Lord Vargrave; but his picture startled and appalled her. For difficulties in a palace she might be prepared—perhaps even for some privations in a *cottage ornée*—but certainly not for penury in

a lodging-house! She listened by degrees with more attention to Vargrave's description of the power and homage that would be hers if she could secure Lord Doltimore: she listened, and was in part consoled. But the thought of Evelyn again crossed her; and, perhaps, with natural jealousy was mingled some compunction at the fate to which Lord Vargrave thus coldly appeared to condemn one so lovely and so innocent.

"But do not, Vargrave," she said, "do not be too sanguine; Evelyn may reject you. She does not see you with my eyes; it is only a sense of honor that, as yet, forbids her openly to refuse the fulfilment of an engagement from which I know that she shrinks; and if she does refuse,—and you be free,—and I another's——"

"Even in that case," interrupted Vargrave, "I must turn to the Golden Idol; my rank and name must buy me an heiress, if not so endowed as Evelyn, wealthy enough, at least, to take from my wheels the drag-chain of disreputable debt. But Evelyn—I will not doubt of her!—her heart is still unoccupied?

"True, as yet her affections are not engaged."

"And this Maltravers—she is romantic, I fancy—did he seem captivated by her beauty or her fortune?"

"No, indeed, I think not; he has been very little with us of late. He talked to her more as to a child—there is a disparity of years."

"I am many years older than Maltravers," muttered Vargrave, moodily.

"You!—but your *manner* is livelier, and, therefore, younger!"

"Fair flatterer! Maltravers does not love me: I fear his report of my character——"

"I never heard him speak of you, Vargrave; and I will do Evelyn the justice to say, that precisely as she does not love she esteems and respects you."

"Esteems—respects—these are the feelings for a prudent Hymen," said Vargrave, with a smile. "But, hark! I don't hear the billiard balls; they may find us here—we had better separate."

Lord Vargrave lounged into the billiard-room. The young men had just finished playing, and were about to visit Thunderer, who had won the race, and was now the property of Lord Doltimore.

Vargrave accompanied them to the stables; and, after concealing his ignorance of horse-flesh as well as he could, beneath a profusion of compliments on fore-hand, hind-quarters, breeding, bone, substance, and famous points, he contrived to draw Doltimore into the court-yard, while Colonel Legard remained in converse high with the head-groom.

"Doltimore, I leave Knaresdean to-morrow; you go to London, I suppose? Will you take a little packet for me to the Home Office?"

"Certainly, when I go; but I think of staying a few days with Legard's uncle—the old admiral—he has a hunting-box in the neighborhood, and has asked us both over."

"Oh! I can detect the attraction—but certainly it is a fair one—the handsomest girl in the county; pity she has no money."

"I don't care for money," said Lord Doltimore, coloring and settling his chin in his neckcloth; "but you are mistaken; I have no thoughts that way. Miss Merton is a very fine girl; but I doubt much if she cares for me. I would never marry any woman who was not very much in love with me." And Lord Doltimore laughed rather foolishly.

"You are more modest than clear-sighted," said Vargrave, smiling; "but mark my words—I predict that the beauty of next season will be a certain Caroline Lady Doltimore!"

The conversation dropped.

"I think that will be settled well," said Vargrave to himself, as he was dressing for dinner. "Caroline will manage Doltimore, and I shall manage one vote in the Lords and three in the Commons. I have already taken him into proper politics; a trifle all this, to be sure: but I had nothing else to amuse me, and one must never lose an occasion. Besides, Doltimore is rich, and rich friends are always useful. I have Caroline, too, half in my power, and she may be of service with respect to this Evelyn, whom, instead of loving, I half hate: she has crossed my path, robbed me of my wealth; and now—if she does refuse me——but no, I will not think of *that!*"

CHAPTER IX.

Out of our reach the gods have laid
Of time to come the event;
And laugh to see the fools affaid
Of what the knaves invent."
—SEDLEY, *from Lycophron.*

THE next day Caroline returned to the rectory in Lady Raby's carriage: and two hours after her arrival came Lord Vargrave. Mr. Merton had secured the principal persons in the neighborhood to meet a guest so distinguished, and Lord Vargrave, bent on shining in the eyes of Evelyn, charmed all with his affability and wit. Evelyn he thought seemed pale and dispirited. He pertinaciously devoted himself to her all the evening. Her ripening understanding was better able than heretofore to appreciate his abilities; yet, inwardly, she drew comparisons between his conversation and that of Maltravers, not to the advantage of the former. There was much that amused, but nothing that interested, in Lord Vargrave's fluent ease. When he attempted sentiment, the vein was hard and hollow;—he was only at home on worldly topics. Caroline's spirits were, as usual in society, high, but her laugh seemed forced, and her eye absent.

The next day, after breakfast, Lord Vargrave walked alone to Burleigh: as he crossed the copse that bordered the park, a large Persian grayhound sprang towards him, barking loudly; and, lifting his eyes, he perceived the form of a man walking slowly along one of the paths that intersected the wood. He recognized Maltravers. They had not till then encountered since their meeting a few weeks before Florence's death; and a pang of conscience came across the schemer's cold heart. Years rolled away from the past—he recalled the young, generous, ardent man, whom, ere the character or career of either had been developed, he had called his friend. He remembered their wild adventures and gay follies, in climes where they had been all in all to each other;—and the beardless boy, whose heart and purse were ever open to him, and to whose very errors of youth and inexperienced passion, he, the elder and the wiser, had led and tempted, rose before him in contrast to the grave and melancholy air of the baffled and solitary man, who now slowly approached him —the man whose proud career he had served to thwart—whose heart his schemes had prematurely soured—whose best years had been consumed in exile—a sacrifice to the grave, which a selfish and dishonorable villainy had prepared!—Cesarini, the inmate of a madhouse—Florence in her shroud:—such were the visions the sight of Maltravers conjured up. And to the soul which the unwonted and momentary remorse awakened, a boding voice whispered—"And thinkest *thou* that thy schemes shall prosper, and thy aspirations succeed?" For the first time in his life, perhaps, the unimaginative Vargrave felt the mystery of a presentiment of warning and of evil.

The two men met; and with an emotion which seemed that of honest and real feeling, Lumley silently held out his hand, and half turned away his head.

"Lord Vargrave!" said Maltravers, with an equal agitation, "it is long since we have encountered."

"Long—very long," answered Lumley, striving hard to regain his self-possession; "years have changed us both; but I trust it has still left in you, as it has in me, the remembrance of our old friendship."

Maltravers was silent, and Lord Vargrave continued—

"You do not answer me, Maltravers: can political differences, opposite pursuits, or the mere lapse of time, have sufficed to create an irrevocable gulf between us? Why may we not be friends again?"

"Friends!" echoed Maltravers; "at our age that word is not so lightly spoken—that tie is not so unthinkingly formed—as when we were younger men."

"But may not the old tie be renewed?"

"Our ways in life are different; and were I to scan your motives and career with the scrutinizing eyes of friendship, it might only serve to separate us yet more. I am sick of the great juggle of ambition, and I have no sympathy left for those who creep into the pint-bottle, or swallow the naked sword.

"If you despise the exhibition, why, then, let us laugh at it together, for I am as cynical as yourself."

"Ah!" said Maltravers with a smile, half mournful, half bitter, "but are you not one of the Impostors?"

"Who ought better to judge of the Eleusini-

ana than one of the Initiated? But, seriously, why on earth should political differences part private friendships? Thank Heaven! such has never been my maxim."

"If the differences be the result of honest convictions on either side, No. But are you honest, Lumley?"

"Faith, I had got into the habit of thinking so; and habit's a second nature. However, I dare say we shall meet yet in the arena, so I must not betray my weak points. How is it, Maltravers, that they see so little of you at the rectory? you are a great favorite there. Have you any living that Charley Merton could hold with his own?—You shake your head. And what think you of Miss Cameron, my intended?"

"You speak lightly. Perhaps you——"

"Feel deeply—you were going to say. I do. In the hand of my ward, Evelyn Cameron, I trust to obtain at once the domestic happiness to which I have as yet been a stranger, and the wealth necessary in my career."

Lord Vargrave continued, after a short pause, "Though my avocations have separated us so much, I have no doubt of her steady affection,—and I may add of her sense of honor. She alone can repair to me what else had been injustice in my uncle." He then proceeded to repeat the moral obligations which the late lord had imposed on Evelyn;—obligations that he greatly magnified. Maltravers listened attentively, and said little.

"And these obligations being fairly considered," added Vargrave, with a smile, "I think, even had I rivals, that they could scarcely in honor attempt to break an existing engagement."

"Not while the engagement lasted," answered Maltravers; "not till one or the other had declined to fulfil it, and therefore left both free: but I trust it will be an alliance in which all but affection will be forgotten—that of honor alone would be but a harsh tie."

"Assuredly," said Vargrave; and, as if satisfied with what had passed, he turned the conversation—praised Burleigh—spoke of county matters—resumed his habitual gaiety, though it was somewhat subdued—and, promising to call again soon, he at last took his leave.

Maltravers pursued his solitary rambles: and his commune with himself was stern and searching.

"And so," thought he, this prize is reserved for Vargrave! Why should I deem him unworthy of the treasure? May he not be worthier, at all events, than this soured temper and erring heart? And he is assured too of her affection? Why this jealous pang? Why can the fountain within never be exhausted? Why, through so many scenes and sufferings, have I still retained the vain madness of my youth—the haunting susceptibility to love? This is my latest folly.

BOOK FOURTH.

Γυναικὸς οὐδὲ χρῆμ' ἀνὴρ λαίζεται
Ἐσθλῆς ἄμεινον.—SIMONIDES.

A virtuous woman is man's greatest pride.

CHAPTER I.

"Abroad uneasy, nor content at home.
* * * * *
And Wisdom shows the ill without the cure."
HAMMOND: *Elegies.*

Two or three days after the interview between Lord Vargrave and Maltravers, the solitude of Burleigh was relieved by the arrival of Mr. Cleveland. The good old gentleman, when free from attacks of the gout, which were now somewhat more frequent than formerly, was the same cheerful and intelligent person as ever. Amiable, urbane, accomplished, and benevolent—there was just enough worldliness in Cleveland's nature to make his views sensible as far as they went, but to bound their scope. Every thing he said was so rational—and yet, to an imaginative person, his conversation was unsatisfactory, and his philosophy somewhat chilling.

"I cannot say how pleased and surprised I am at your care of the fine old place," said he to Maltravers, as, leaning on his cane and his *ci-devant* pupil's arm, he loitered observantly through the grounds—"I see every where the presence of the Master."

And certainly the praise was deserved!—the gardens were now in order—the delapidated fences were repaired—the weeds no longer encumbered the walks—Nature was just assisted and relieved by Art, without being oppressed by too officious a service from her handmaid. In the house itself, some suitable and appropriate repairs and decorations—with such articles of furniture as combined modern comfort with the ancient and picturesque shapes of a former fashion—had redeemed the mansion from all appearance of dreariness and neglect, while still was left to its quaint halls and chambers the character which belonged to their architecture and associations. It was surprising how much a little exercise of simple taste had effected.

"I am glad you approve what I have done," said Maltravers. "I know not how it was, but the desolation of the place, when I returned to it, reproached me. We contract friendship with places as with human beings, and fancy they have claims upon us;—at least that is my weakness."

"And an amiable one it is, too—I share it. As for me, I look upon Temple Grove as a fond husband upon a fair wife. I am always anxious to adorn it, and as proud of its beauty as if it could understand and thank me for my partial admiration. When I leave you, I intend going to Paris, for the purpose of attending a sale of the pictures and effects of Monsieur De ——. These auctions are to me what a jeweller's shop is to a lover; but then, Ernest, I am an old bachelor."

"And I, too, am an Arcadian," said Maltravers, with a smile.

"Ah, but you are not too old for repentance. Burleigh now requires nothing but a mistress."

"Perhaps it may soon receive that addition. I am yet undecided whether I shall sell it."

"Sell it!—sell Burleigh!—the last memorial of your mother's ancestry!—the classic retreat of the graceful Digbys! Sell Burleigh!"

"I had almost resolved to do so when I came hither; then I foreswore the intention: now again I sometimes sorrowfully return to the idea."

"And in Heaven's name, why?"

"My old restlessness returns. Busy myself as I will here, I find the range of action monotonous and confined. I began too soon to draw around me the large circumference of literature and action; and the small provincial sphere seems to me a sad going back in life. Perhaps I should not feel this, were my home less lonely; but as it is—no, the wanderer's ban is on me, and I again turn towards the lands of excitement and adventure."

"I understand this, Ernest; but why is your home so solitary? You are still at the age in which wise and congenial unions are the most frequently formed; your temper is domestic—your easy fortune and sobered ambition allow you to choose without reference to worldly considerations. Look round the world, and mix with the world again; and give Burleigh the mistress it requires."

Maltravers shook his head, and sighed.

"I do not say," continued Cleveland, wrapt in the glowing interest of the theme, "that you should marry a mere girl—but an amiable woman, who like yourself, has seen something of life, and knows how to reckon on its cares, and to be contented with its enjoyments."

"You have said enough, said Maltravers, impatiently; "an experienced woman of the world, whose freshness of hope and heart is gone! What a picture! No; to me there is something inexpressibly beautiful in innocence and youth. But you say justly—my years are not those that would make an union with youth desirable, or well suited."

"I do *not* say that," said Cleveland, taking a pinch of snuff; "but you should avoid great disparity of age—not for the sake of that disparity itself, because with it is involved discord of temper—pursuits. A *very* young woman, new to the world, will not be contented with home alone; you are at once too gentle to curb her wishes, and a little too stern and reserved—(pardon me for saying so)—to be quite congenial to very early and sanguine youth."

"It is true," said Maltravers, with a tone of voice that showed he was struck with the remark; "but how have we fallen on this subject? let us change it—I have no idea of marriage—the gloomy reminiscence of Florence Lascelles chains me to the past."

"Poor Florence!—she might once have suited you, but now you are older, and would require a calmer and more malleable temper."

"Peace, I implore you!"

The conversation was changed; and at noon Mr. Merton, who had heard of Cleveland's arrival, called at Burleigh to renew an old acquaintance. He invited them to pass the evening at the rectory; and Cleveland, hearing that whist was a regular amusement, accepted the invitation for his host and himself. But when the evening came, Maltravers pleaded indisposition, and Cleveland was obliged to go alone.

When the old gentleman retured, about midnight, he found Maltravers awaiting him in the library; and Cleveland, having won fourteen points, was in a very gay, conversible humor.

"You perverse hermit!" said he, "talk of solitude, indeed, with so pleasant a family a hundred yards distant! You deserve to be solitary—I have no patience with you. They complain bitterly of your desertion, and say you were, at first, the *enfant de la maison.*"

"So you like the Mertons? The clergyman is sensible, but commonplace."

"A very agreeable man, despite your cynical definition, and plays a very fair rubber. But Vargrave is a first-rate player."

"Vargrave is there still?"

"Yes, he breakfasts with us to-morrow—he invited himself."

"Humph!"

"He played one rubber; the rest of the evening he devoted himself to the prettiest girl I ever saw—Miss Cameron. What a sweet face!—so modest, yet so intelligent! I talked with her a good deal during the deals, in which I cut out. I almost lost my heart to her."

"So Lord Vargrave devoted himself to Miss Cameron?"

"To be sure,—you know they are to be married soon. Merton told me so. She is very rich. He is the luckiest fellow imaginable, that Vargrave! But he is much too old for her: she seems to think so too. I can't explain why I think it; but by her pretty reserved manner I saw that she tried to keep the gay minister at a distance: but it would not do. Now, if you were ten years younger, or Miss Cameron ten years older, you might have had some chance of cutting out your old friend."

"So you think I also am too old for a lover?"

"For a lover of a girl of seventeen, certainly. You seem touchy on the score of age, Ernest."

"Not I;" and Maltravers laughed.

"No! There was a young gentleman present, who, I think, Vargrave might really find a dangerons rival—a Colonel Legard—one of the handsomest men I ever saw in my life; just the style to turn a romantic young lady's head; a mixture of the wild and the thoroughbred; black curls—superb eyes—and the softest manners in the world. But, to be sure, he has lived all his life in the best society. Not so his friend, Lord Doltimore, who has a little too much of the green-room lounge and French *café* manner for my taste."

"Doltimore—Legard—names new to me; I never met them at the rectory.'

"Possibly; they are staying at Admiral Legard's, in the neighborhood. Miss Merton made their acquaintance at Knaresdean. A good old lady—the most perfect Mrs. Grundy one would wish to meet with—who owns the monosyllabic appellation of Hare (and who, being my partner, trumped my king!), assured me that Lord Doltimore was desperately in love with Caroline Merton. By the by, now, there is a young lady of a proper age for you—handsome and clever, too."

"You talk of antidotes to matrimony:—and so Miss Cameron——"

"Oh, no more of Miss Cameron now, or I shall sit up all night; she has half turned my head. I can't help pitying her—married to one so careless and worldly as Lord Vargrave—thrown so young into the whirl of London. Poor thing! she had better have fallen in love with Legard; which I dare say she will do, after all. Well, good night!"

CHAPTER II.

'Passion, as frequently is seen,
Subsiding, settles into spleen:
Hence, as the plague of happy life,
I ran away from party strife."
—MATTHEW GREEN.

"Here nymphs from hollow oaks relate
The dark decrees and will of fate."—*Ibid.*

ACCORDING to his engagement Vargrave breakfasted the next morning at Burleigh. Maltravers, at first, struggled to return his familiar cordiality with equal graciousness. Condemning himself for former and unfounded suspicions, he wrestled against feelings which he could not, or would not, analyze, but which made Lumley an unwelcome visitor, and connected him with painful associations, whether of the present or the past. But there were points on which the penetration of Maltravers served to justify his prepossessions.

The conversation, chiefly sustained by Cleveland and Vargrave, fell on public questions; and, as one was opposed to the other, Vargrave's exposition of views and motives had in them so much of the self-seeking of the professional placeman, that they might well have offended any man tinged by the lofty mania of political Quixotism. It was with a strange mixture of feelings that Maltravers listened: at one moment, he proudly congratulated himself on having quitted a career where such opinions seemed so well to prosper; at another, his better and juster sentiments awoke the long-dormant combative faculty, and he almost longed for the turbulent but sublime arena, in which truths are vindicated and mankind advanced.

The interview did not serve for that renewal of intimacy which Vargrave appeared to seek; and Maltravers rejoiced when the placeman took his departure.

Lumley, who was about to pay a morning visit to Lord Doltimore, had borrowed Mr. Merton's stanhope, as being better adapted than any statelier vehicle to get rapidly through the cross-roads which led to Admiral Legard's house; and as he settled himself in the seat, with his servant by his side, he said laughingly, "I almost fancy myself naughty Master Lumley again in this young-man-kind-of two-wheeled cockle-boat; not dignified, but rapid, eh?"

And Lumley's face as he spoke, had in it so much of frank gaiety, and his manner was so simple, that Maltravers could with difficulty fancy him the same man who, five minutes before, had been uttering sentiments that might have become the oldest-hearted intriguer whom the hot-bed of ambition ever reared.

As soon as Lumley was gone, Maltravers

left Cleveland alone to write letters (Cleveland was an exemplary and voluminous correspondent), and strolled with his dogs into the village. The effect which the presence of Maltravers produced among his peasantry was one that seldom failed to refresh and soothe his more bitter and disturbed thoughts. They had gradually (for the poor are quick sighted) become sensible of his *justice*—a finer quality than many that seem more amiable. They felt that his real object was to make them better and happier; and they had learned to see that the means he adopted generally advanced the end. Besides, if sometimes stern, he was never capricious or unreasonable; and then, too, he would listen patiently and advise kindly. They were a little in awe of him, but the awe only served to make them more industrious and orderly; to stimulate the idle man—to reclaim the drunkard, He was one of the favorers of the small-allotment system; not, indeed as a panacea, but as one excellent stimulant to exertion and independence: and his chosen rewards for good conduct were in such comforts as served to awaken, amongst those hitherto passive, dogged, and hopeless, a desire to better and improve their condition. Somehow or other, without direct alms, the good-wife found that the little savings in the cracked tea-pot, or the old stocking, had greatly increased since the squire's return; while her husband came home from his moderate cups at the ale-house more sober and in better temper. Having already saved something was a great reason why he should save more. The new school, too, was so much better conducted than the old one; the children actually liked going there; and now and then there were little village feasts connected with the school-room; play and work were joint associations.

And Maltravers looked into his cottages, and looked at the allotment-ground; and it was pleasant to him to say to himself, "I am not altogether without use in life." But as he pursued his lonely walk, and the glow of self-approval died away with the scenes that called it forth, the cloud again settled on his brow; and again he felt that, in solitude, the passions feed upon the heart. As he thus walked along the green lane, and the insect life of summer rustled audibly among the shadowy hedges, and along the thick grass that sprang up on either side, he came suddenly upon a little group, that arrested all his attention.

It was a woman, clad in rags, bleeding, and seemingly insensible, supported by the overseer of the parish and a laborer.

"What is the matter?" asked Maltravers.

"A poor woman has been knocked down run over by a gentleman in a gig, your honor," replied the overseer. "He stopped, half an hour ago, at my house, to tell me that she was lying on the road; and he has given me two sovereigns for her. But, poor cretur! she was too heavy for me to carry her, and I was forced to leave her and call Tom to help me."

"The gentleman might have stayed to see what were the consequences of his own act," muttered Maltravers, as he examined the wound in the temple, whence the blood flowed copiously.

"He said he was in a great hurry, your honor," said the village official, overhearing Maltravers. "I think it was one of the grand folks up at the Parsonage; for I know it was Mr. Merton's bay horse—he is a hot 'un!"

"Does the poor woman live in the neighborhood?—Do you know her?" asked Maltravers, turning from the contemplation of this new instance of Vargrave's selfishness of character.

"No; the old body seems quite a stranger here—a tramper, or beggar, I think, sir. But it won't be a settlement if we take her in; and we can carry her to the Chequers, up the village, your honor."

"What is the nearest house—your own?"

"Yes;—but we be so busy now!"

"She shall not go to your house and be neglected. And as for the public-house, it is too noisy: we must move her to the Hall."

"Your honor!" ejaculated the overseer, opening his eyes.

"It is not very far; she is severely hurt. Get a hurdle—lay a mattress on it. Make haste, both of you; I will wait here till you return."

The poor woman was carefully placed on the grass by the road-side, and Maltravers supported her head, while the men hastened to obey his orders.

CHAPTER III.

"Alas from that forked hill, the boasted seat
Of studious Peace and mild Philosophy,
Indignant murmurs mote be heard to threat."
—WEST.

"MR. CLEVELAND wanted to enrich one of his letters with a quotation from Ariosto, which he but imperfectly remembered. He had seen the book he wished to refer to in the little study, the day before; and he quitted the library to search for it.

As he was tumbling over some volumes that lay piled on the writing-table, he felt a student's curiosity to discover what now constituted his host's favorite reading. He was surprised to observe, that the greater portion of the works that, by the doubled leaf and the pencilled reference, seemed most frequently consulted, were not of a literary nature—they were chiefly scientific; and astronomy seemed the chosen science. He then remembered that he had heard Maltravers speaking to a builder, employed on the recent repairs, on the subject of an observatory. "This is very strange." thought Cleveland; "he gives up literature, the rewards of which are in his reach, and turns to science, at an age too late to discipline his mind to its austere training."

Alas! Cleveland did not understand that there are times in life when imaginative minds seek to numb and to blunt imagination. Still less did he feel that, when we perversely refuse to apply our active faculties to the catholic interests of the world, they turn morbidly into channels of research, the least akin to their real genius. By the collision of minds alone does each mind discover what is its proper product: left to ourselves, our talents become but intellectual eccentricities.

Some scattered papers, in the handwriting of Maltravers, fell from one of the volumes. Of these, a few were but algebraical calculations, or short scientific suggestions, the value of which Mr. Cleveland's studies did not enable him to ascertain: but in others they were wild snatches of mournful and impassioned verse, which showed that the old vein of poetry still flowed, though no longer to the daylight. These verses Cleveland thought himself justified in glancing over; they seemed to portray a state of mind which deeply interested, and greatly saddened him. They expressed, indeed, a firm determination to bear up against both the memory and the fear of ill; but mysterious and hinted allusions here and there served to denote some recent and yet existent struggle, revealed by the heart only to the genius. In these partial and imperfect self-communings and confessions, there was the evidence of the pining affections, the wasted life, the desolate hearth of the lonely man. Yet, so calm was Maltravers himself, even to his early friend, that Cleveland knew not what to think of the reality of the feelings painted. Had that fervid and romantic spirit been again awakened by a living object?—if so, where was the object found? The dates affixed to the verses were most recent. But whom had Maltravers seen? Cleveland's thoughts turned to Caroline Merton—to Evelyn; but, when he had spoken of both, nothing in the countenance, the manner, of Maltravers had betrayed emotion. And once the heart of Maltravers had so readily betrayed itself! Cleveland knew not how pride, years, and suffering, school the features,and repress the outward signs of what pass within. While thus engaged, the door of the study opened abruptly, and the servant announced Mr. Merton.

"A thousand pardons," said the courteous rector. "I fear we disturb you; but Admiral Legard and Lord Doltimore, who called on us this morning, were so anxious to see Burleigh, I thought I might take the liberty. We have come over quite in a large party—taken the place by storm. Mr. Maltravers is out, I hear; but you will let us see the house. My allies are already in the hall, examining the armor."

Cleveland, ever sociable and urbane, answered suitably, and went with Mr. Merton into the hall, where Caroline, her little sisters, Evelyn, Lord Doltimore, Admiral Legard, and his nephew, were assembled.

"Very proud to be my host's representative and your guide," said Cleveland. "Your visit, Lord Doltimore, is indeed an agreeable surprise. Lord Vargrave left us an hour or so since, to call on you at Admiral Legard's: we buy our pleasure with his disappointment."

"It is very unfortunate," said the admiral, a bluff, harsh-looking old gentleman; "but we were not aware till we saw Mr. Merton, of the

honor Lord Vargrave has done us. I can't think how we missed him on the road."

"My dear uncle," said Colonel Legard, in a peculiarly sweet and agreeable tone of voice, "you forget; we came three miles round by the high-road; and Mr. Merton says that Lord Vargrave took the short cut by Langley End. My uncle, Mr. Cleveland, never feels in safety upon land, unless the road is as wide as the British Channel, and the horses go before the wind at the rapid pace of two knots aud a half an hour!"

"I just wish I had you at sea, Mr. Jackanapes," said the admiral, looking grimly at his handsome nephew, while he shook his cane at him.

The nephew smiled; and, falling back, conversed with Evelyn.

The party were now shown over the house; and Lord Doltimore was loud in its praises. It was like a château he had once hired in Normandy—it had a French character; those old chairs were in excellent taste—quite the style of Francis the First.

"I know no man I respect more than Mr. Maltravers," quoth the admiral. "Since he has been amongst us this time, he has been a pattern to us country gentleman. He would make an excellent colleague for Sir John. We really must get him to stand against that young puppy, who is member of the House of Commons only because his father is a peer, and never votes more than twice a session."

Mr. Merton looked grave.

"I wish to Heaven you could persuade him to stay amongst you," said Cleveland. "He has half taken it into his head to part with Burleigh!"

"Part with Burleigh!" exclaimed Evelyn, turning abrubtly from the handsome colonel, in whose conversation she had hitherto seemed absorbed.

"My very ejaculation when I heard him say so, my dear young lady."

"I wish he would," said Lord Doltimore, hastily, and glancing towards Caroline. "I should much like to buy it. What do you think would be the purchase-money?"

"Don't talk so cold-bloodedly," said the admiral, letting the point of his cane fall with great emphasis on the floor. "I can't bear to see old families deserting their old places—quite wicked. You buy Burleigh! have not you got a country-seat of your own, my lord? Go and live there, and take Mr. Maltravers for your model—you could not have a better."

Lord Doltimore sneered—colored—settled his neckcloth—and, turning round to Colonel Legard, whispered, "Legard, your good uncle is a bore."

Legard looked a little offended, and made no reply.

"But," said Caroline, coming to the relief of her admirer, "if Mr. Maltravers will sell the place, surely he could not have a better successor."

"He sha'n't sell the place, ma'am, and that's poz!" cried the admiral. "The whole county shall sign a round robin to tell him it's a shame; and if any one dares to buy it, we'll send them to Coventry."

Miss Merton laughed; but looked round the old wainscot walls with unusual interest: she thought it would be a fine thing to be Lady of Burleigh!

"And what is that picture so carefully covered up?" said the admiral, as they now stood in the library.

"The late Mrs. Maltravers, Ernest's mother," replied Cleveland, slowly. "He dislikes it to be shown—to strangers: the other is a Digby."

Evelyn looked towards the veiled portrait and thought of her first interview with Maltravers; but the soft voice of Colonel Legard murmured in her ear, and her revery was broken.

Cleveland eyed the colonel, and muttered to himself, "Vargrave should keep a sharp look-out."

They had now finished their round of the show-apartments—which, indeed, had little but their antiquity and old portraits to recommend them—and were in a lobby at the back of the house, communicating with a court-yard, two sides of which were occupied with the stables. The sight of the stables reminded Caroline of the Arab horses; and at the word "horses," Lord Doltimore seized Legard's arm, and carried him off to inspect the animals; Caroline, her father, and the admiral, followed. Mr. Cleveland happened not to have on his walking shoes; and the flag-stones in the court-yard looked damp; and Mr. Cleveland, like most old bachelors, was prudently afraid of cold: so he excused

himself and stayed behind. He was talking to Evelyn about the Digbys, and full of anecdotes about Sir Kenelm, at the moment the rest departed so abruptly; and Evelyn was interested, so she insisted on keeping him company. The old gentleman was flattered; he thought it excellent breeding in Miss Cameron. The children ran out to renew acquaintance with the peacock, who perched on an old stirrup-stone, was sunning his gay plumage in the noon-day.

"It is astonishing," said Cleveland, "how certain family features are transmitted from generation to generation! Maltravers has still the forehead and eyebrows of the Digbys that peculiar, brooding, thoughtful forehead, which you observed in the picture of Sir Kenelm. Once, too, he had much the same dreaming character of mind, but he has lost that, in some measure at least. He has fine qualities, Miss Cameron—I have known him since he was born. I trust his career is not yet closed; could he but form ties that would bind him to England, I should indulge in higher expectations than I did even when the wild boy turned half the heads in Gottingen!

"But we were talking of family portraits—there is one in the entrance hall, which perhaps you have not observed; it is half obliterated by damp and time—yet it is of a remarkable personage, connected with Maltravers by ancestral intermarriages—Lord Falkland, the Falkland of Clarendon. A man weak in character, but made most interesting by history. Utterly unfitted for the severe ordeal of those stormy times; sighing for peace when his whole soul should have been in war; and repentant alike whether with the Parliament or the King, but still a personage of elegant and endearing associations; a student-soldier, with a high heart and a gallant spirit. Come and look at his features—homely and worn, but with a characteristic air of refinement and melancholy thought."

Thus running on, the agreeable old gentleman drew Evelyn into the outer hall. Upon arriving there, through a small passage, which opened upon the hall, they were surprised to find the old housekeeper and another female servant, standing by a rude kind of couch, on which lay the form of the poor woman described in the last chapter. Maltravers and two other men were also there. And Maltravers himself was giving orders to his servants, while he leant over the sufferer, who was now conscious both of pain and the service rendered to her. As Evelyn stopped abruptly and in surprise, opposite and almost at the foot of the homely litter, the woman raised herself up on one arm, and gazed at her with a wild stare; then, muttering some incoherent words, which appeared to betoken delirium, she sunk back, and was again insensible.

CHAPTER V.

Hence oft to win some stubborn maid,
Still does the wanton god assume
The martial air, the gay cockade,
The sword, the shoulder-knot, and plume."
—MARRIOTT.

THE hall was cleared, the sufferer had been removed, and Maltravers was left alone with Cleveland and Evelyn.

He simply and shortly narrated the adventure of the morning; but he did not mention that Vargrave had been the cause of the injury his new guest had sustained. Now this event had served to make a mutual and kindred impression on Evelyn and Maltravers. The humanity of the latter, natural and commonplace as it was, was an endearing recollection to Evelyn, precisely as it showed that his cold theory of disdain towards the mass did not affect his actual conduct towards individuals. On the other hand, Maltravers had perhaps been yet more impressed with the prompt and ingenuous sympathy which Evelyn had testified towards the sufferer; it had so evidently been her first gracious and womanly impulse to hasten to the side of this humble stranger. In that impulse, Maltravers himself had been almost forgotten; and as the poor woman lay pale and lifeless, and the young Evelyn bent oven her in beautiful compassion, Maltravers thought she had never seemed so lovely, so irresistible—in fact, Pity in woman is a great beautifier.

As Maltravers finished his short tale, Evelyn's eyes were fixed upon him with such frank, and yet such soft approval, that the look went straight to his heart. He quickly turned away, and abruptly changed the conversation.

"But how long have you been here, Miss Cameron,—and your companions?"

"We are again intruders; but this time it was not my fault."

"No," said Cleveland, "for a wonder; it was male, and not lady-like curiosity that trespassed on Bluebeard's chamber. But, however, to soften your resentment, know that Miss Cameron has brought you a purchaser for Burleigh. Now, then, we can test the sincerity of your wish to part with it. I assure you, meanwhile, that Miss Cameron was as much shocked at the idea as I was. Were you not?"

"But you surely have no intention of selling Burleigh?" said Evelyn, anxiously.

"I fear I do not know my own mind."

"Well," said Cleveland, "here comes your tempter. Lord Doltimore, let me introduce Mr. Maltravers."

Lord Doltimore bowed.

"Been admiring your horses, Mr. Maltravers. I never saw anything so perfect as the black one; may I ask where you bought him?"

"It was a present to me," answered Maltravers."

"A present!"

"Yes, from one who would not have sold that horse for a king's ransom:—an old Arab chief, with whom I formed a kind of friendship in the Desert. A wound disabled him from riding, and he bestowed the horse on me, with as much solemn tenderness for the gift as if he had given me his daughter in marriage."

"I think of travelling into the East," said Lord Doltimore, with much gravity: "I suppose nothing will induce you to sell the black horse?"

"Lord Doltimore!" said Maltravers, in a tone of lofty surprise."

"I do not care for the price," continued the young nobleman, a little disconcerted.

"No. I never sell any horse that has once learned to know me. I would as soon think of selling a friend. In the desert one's horse is one's friend. I am almost an Arab myself in these matters."

"But talking of sale and barter, reminds me of Burleigh," said Cleveland, maliciously. "Lord Doltimore is an universal buyer. He covets all your goods: he will take the house, if he can't have the stables."

"I only mean," said Lord Doltimore, rather peevishly, "that, if you wish to part with Burleigh, I should like to have the option of purchase."

"I will remember it—if I determine to sell the place," answered Maltravers, smiling gravely. "at present I am undecided."

He turned away towards Evelyn as he spoke, and almost started to observe that she was joined by a stranger, whose approach he had not before noticed; and that stranger a man of such remarkable personal advantages, that, had Maltravers been in Vargrave's position, he might reasonably have experienced a pang of jealous apprehension. Slightly above the common height—slender, yet strongly formed—set off by every advantage of dress, of air, of the nameless tone and pervading refinement that sometimes, though not always, springs from early and habitual intercourse with the most polished female society—Colonel Legard, at the age of eight-and-twenty, had acquired a reputation for beauty almost as popular and as well known as that which men usually acquire by mental qualifications. Yet there was nothing effeminate in his countenance, the symmetrical features of which were made masculine and expressive by the rich olive of the complexion, and the close jetty curls of the Antinous-like hair.

They seemed, as they there stood—Evelyn and Legard—so well suited to each other in personal advantages—their different styles so happily contrasted; and Legard, at the moment, was regarding her with such respectful admiration, and whispering compliment to her in so subdued a tone, that the dullest observer might have ventured a prophecy by no means agreeable to the hopes of Lumley, Lord Vargrave.

But a feeling or fear of this nature was not that which occurred to Maltravers, or dictated his startled exclamation or surprise.

Legard looked up as he heard the exclamation, and saw Maltravers, whose back had hitherto been turned towards him. He too, was evidently surprised, and seemingly confused; the color mounted to his cheek, and then left it pale.

"Colonel Legard," said Cleveland, "a thousand apologies for my neglect: I really did not observe you enter—you came round

by the front door, I suppose. Let me make you acquainted with Mr. Maltravers."

Legard bowed low.

"We have met before," said he, in embarrassed accents: "at Venice, I think!"

Maltravers inclined his head rather stiffly at first, but then, as if moved by a second impulse, held out his hand cordially.

"Oh, Mr. Ernest, here you are!" cried Sophy, bounding into the hall, followed by Mr. Merton, the old admiral, Caroline, and Cecilia.

The interruption seemed welcome and opportune. The admiral, with blunt cordiality, expressed his pleasure at being made known to Mr. Maltravers.

The conversation grew general—refreshments were proffered and declined—the visit drew to its close.

It so happened that, as the guests departed, Evelyn, from whose side the constant colonel had insensibly melted away, lingered last,—save, indeed, the admiral, who was discussing with Cleveland a new specific for the gout. And as Maltravers stood on the steps, Evelyn turned to him with all her beautiful *naiveté* of mingled timidity and kindness, and said,

"And are we really never to see you again,—never to hear again your tales of Egypt and Arabia—never to talk over Tasso and Dante. No books—no talk—no disputes—no quarrels? What have we done? I thought we had made it up—and yet you are still unforgiving. Give me a good scold, and be friends!"

"Friends!—you have no friend more anxious, more devoted than I am. Young, rich, fascinating as you are, you will carve no impression on human hearts deeper than that you have graven here!"

Carried away by the charm of her childlike familiarity and enchanting sweetness, Maltravers had said more than he intended; yet his eyes, his emotion, said more than his words.

Evelyn colored deeply, and her whole manner changed. However, she turned away, and saying, with a forced gaiety, "Well, then, you will not desert us—we shall see you once more?" hurried down the steps to join her companions.

CHAPTER V.

"See how the skilful lover spreads his toils."
—STILLINGFLEET.

THE party had not long returned to the rectory, and the admiral's carriage was ordered, when Lord Vargrave made his appearance. He descanted with gay good humor on his long drive—the bad roads—and his disappointmeut at the *contre-temps* that awaited him; then, drawing aside Colonel Legard, who seemed unusually silent and abstracted, he said to him—

"My dear colonel, my visit this morning was rather to you than to Doltimore. I confess that I should like to see your abilitles enlisted on the side of the Government; and knowing that the post of Storekeeper to the Ordnance will be vacant in a day or two by the promotion of Mr. ——, I wrote to secure the refusal—to-day's post brings me the answer. I offer the place to you; and I trust, before long, to procure you also a seat in parliament. But you must start for London immediately."

A week ago, and Legard's utmost ambition would have been amply gratified by this post; he now hesitated.

"My dear lord," said he, "I cannot say how grateful I feel for your kindness; but—but——"

"Enough: no thanks, my dear Legard. Can you go to town to-morrow."

"Indeed," said Legard, "I fear not; I must consult my uncle."

"I can answer for him; I sounded him before I wrote—reflect! You are not rich, my dear Legard; it is an excellent opening; a seat in parliament, too! Why, what *can* be your reason for hesitation?"

There was something meaning and inquisitive in the tone of voice in which this question was put, that brought the color to the colonel's cheek. He knew not what to reply; and he began, too, to think that he ought not to refuse the appointment. Nay, would his uncle, on whom he was dependent, consent to such a refusal? Lord Vargrave saw the irresolution, and proceeded. He spent ten minutes in combating every scruple, every objection; he placed all the advantages of the post, real or imaginary, in every conceivable point of view before the colonel's eyes; he

sought to flatter, to wheedle, to coax, to weary him into accepting it; and he at length partially succeeded. The colonel petitioned for three days' consideration which Vargrave reluctantly acceded to; and Legard then stepped into his uncle's carriage, with the air rather of a martyr than a maiden placeman.

"Aha!" said Vargrave, chuckling to himself as he took a turn in the grounds, "I have got rid of that handsome knave; and now I shall have Evelyn all to myself!"

CHAPTER VI.

"I am forfeited to eternal disgrace if you do not commiserate.

* * * * *

Go to, then, raise—recover."—BEN JONSON: *Poetaster*.

THE next morning Admiral Legard and his nephew were conversing in the little cabin consecrated by the name of the admiral's "own room."

"Yes," said the Veteran, "it would be moonshine and madness not to accept Vargrave's offer; though one could see through such a millstone as that with half an eye. His lordship is jealous of such a fine, handsome young fellow as you are—and very justly. But as long as he is under the same roof with Miss Cameron, you will have no opportunity to pay your court; when he goes, you can always manage to be in her neighborhood; and then, you know—puppy that you are—her business will be very soon settled." And the admiral eyed the handsome colonel with grim fondness.

Legard sighed.

"Have you any commands at——?" said he; "I am just going to canter over there before Doltimore is up."

"Sad lazy dog, your friend."

"I shall be back by twelve."

"What are you going to——for?"

"Brookes, the farrier, has a little spaniel—King Charles's breed. Miss Cameron is fond of dogs. I can send it to her, with my compliments—it will be a sort of leave-taking."

"Sly rogue; ha, ha, ha!—d——d sly; ha, ha!" and the admiral punched the slender waist of his nephew, and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Good-by, sir."

"Stop, George; I forgot to ask you a question; you never told me you knew Mr. Maltravers. Why don't you cultivate his acquaintance?"

"We met at Venice accidentally. I did not know his name then; he left just as I arrived. As you say, I ought to cultivate his acquaintance."

"Fine character!"

"Very!" said Legard, with energy, as he abruptly quitted the room.

George Legard was an orphan. His father—the admiral's elder brother—had been a spendthrift man of fashion, with a tolerably large unentailed estate. He married a duke's daughter without a sixpence. Estates are troublesome—Mr. Legard's was sold. On the purchase-money the happy pair lived for some years in great comfort, when Mr. Legard died of a brain fever; and his disconsolate widow found herself alone in the world, with a beautiful little curly-headed boy, and an annuity of one thousand a-year, for which her settlement had been exchanged—all the rest of the fortune was gone; a discovery not made till Mr. Legard's death. Lady Louisa did not long survive the loss of her husband and her station in society; her income, of course, died with herself. Her only child was brought up in the house of his grandfather, the duke, till he was of age to hold the office of king's page; thence, as is customary, he was promoted to a commission in the Guards. To the munificent emoluments of his pay, the ducal family liberally added an allowance of two hundred a-year; upon which income Cornet Legard contrived to get very handsomely in debt. The extraordinary beauty of his person, his connections, and his manners, obtained him all the celebrity that fashion can bestow; but poverty is a bad thing. Luckily, at this time, his uncle, the admiral, returned from sea, to settle for the rest of his life in England.

Hitherto the admiral had taken no notice of George. He himself had married a merchant's daughter with a fair portion; and had been blessed with two children, who monopolized all of his affection. But there seemed some mortality in the Legard family; in one year after returning to England and settling in B——shire, the admiral found himself wifeless and childless. He then turned to his orphan nephew; and soon became fonder of

him than he had ever been of his own children. The admiral, though in easy circumstances, was not wealthy; nevertheless, he advanced the money requisite for George's rise in the army, and doubled the allowance bestowed by the duke. His grace heard of this generosity; and discovered that he himself had a very large family growing up; that the marquis was going to be married, and required an increase of income; that he had already behaved most handsomely to his nephew: and the result of this discovery was, that the duke withdrew the two hundred a-year. Legard, however, who looked on his uncle as an exhaustless mine, went on breaking hearts and making debts—till one morning he woke in the Bench. The admiral was hastily summoned to London. He arrived; payed off the duns—a kindness which seriously embarrassed him—swore, scolded, and cried; and finally insisted that Legard should give up that d——d coxcomb regiment, in which he was now captain, retire on half-pay, and learn economy and a change of habits on the Continent.

The admiral, a rough but good-natured man on the whole, had two or three little peculiarities. In the first place, he piqued himself on a sort of John Bull independence; was a bit of a Radical (a strange anomaly in an admiral)—which was owing, perhaps, to two or three young lords having been put over his head in the earlier part of his career; and he made it a point with his nephew (of whose affection he was jealous) to break with those fine grand connections, who plunged him into a sea of extravagance, and then never threw him a rope to save him from drowning.

In the second place, without being stingy, the admiral had a good deal of economy in his disposition. He was not a man to allow his nephew to ruin him. He had an extraordinary old-fashioned horror of gambling—a polite habit of George's;—and he declared, positively, that his nephew must, while a bachelor, learn to live upon seven hundred a-year. Thirdly, the admiral could be a very stern, stubborn, passionate old brute; and when he coolly told George, "Harkye, you young puppy, if you get into debt again—if you exceed the very handsome allowance I make you—I shall just cut you off with a shilling," George was fully aware that his uncle was one who would rigidly keep his word.

However, it was something to be out of debt, and one of the handsomest men of his age; and George Legard, whose rank in the Guards made him a colonel in the line, left England tolerably contented with the state of affairs.

Despite the foibles of his youth, George Legard had many high and generous qualities. Society had done its best to spoil a fine and candid disposition, with abilities far above mediocrity; but society had only partially succeeded. Still, unhappily, dissipation had grown a habit with him; and all his talents were of a nature that brought a ready return. At his age, it was but natural that the praise of *salons* should retain all its sweetness.

In addition to those qualities which please the softer sex, Legard was a good whist-player—superb at billiards—famous as a shot—unrivalled as a horseman—in fact, an accomplished man, "who did ever thing so devilish well!" These accomplishments did not stand him in much stead in Italy; and, though with reluctance and remorse, he took again to gambling—he really *had* nothing else to do.

In Venice, there was, one year, established a society, somewhat on the principle of the *Salon* at Paris. Some rich Venetians belonged to it; but it was chiefly for the convenience of foreigners—French, English, and Austrians. Here there was select gaming in one room, while another apartment served the purposes of a club. Many who never played belonged to this society; but still they were not the *habitués*.

Legard played: he won at first—then he lost—then he won again; it was a pleasant excitement. One night, after winning largely at *roulette*, he sat down to play *écarté* with a Frenchman of high rank. Legard played well at this, as at all scientific games: he thought he should make a fortune out of the Frenchman. The game excited much interest; the crowd gathered round the table; bets ran high; the vanity of Legard, as well as his interest, was implicated in the conflict. It was soon evident that the Frenchman played as well as the Englishman. The stakes, at first tolerably high, were doubled. Legard betted freely—cards went against him: he lost much—lost all that he had—lost more than he had—lost several hundreds, which he promised to pay the next morning. The table was broken up—the spectators separated. Among the latter

had been one Englishman, introduced into the club for the first time that night. He had neither played nor betted: but had observed the game with a quiet and watchful interest. This Englishman lodged at the same hotel as Legard. He was at Venice only for a day; the promised sight of a file of English newspapers had drawn him to the club; the general excitement around had attracted him to the table; and, once there, the spectacle of human emotions exercised its customary charm.

On ascending the stairs that conducted to his apartment, the Englishman heard a deep groan in a room the door of which was a-jar. He paused—the sound was repeated; he gently pushed open the door, and saw Legard seated by a table, while a glass on the opposite wall reflected his working and convulsed countenance, with his hands trembling visibly, as they took a brace of pistols from the case.

The Englishman recognized the loser at the club; and at once divined the act that his madness or his despair dictated. Legard twice took up one of the pistols, and twice laid it down irresolute; the third time he rose with a start, raised the weapon to his head, and the next moment it was wrenched from his grasp.

"Sit down, sir!" said the stranger, in a loud and commanding voice.

Legard, astonished and abashed, sunk once more into his seat, and stared sullenly and half unconsciously at his countryman.

"You have lost your money," said the Englishman, after calmly replacing the pistols in their case, which he locked, putting the key into his pocket; "and that is misfortune enough for one night. If you had won, and ruined your opponent, you would be excessively happy, and go to bed, thinking Good Luck (which is the representative of Providence) watched over you. For my part, I think you ought to be very thankful that you are not the winner."

"Sir," said Legard, recovering from his surprise, and beginning to feel resentment; I do not understand this intrusion in my apartments. You have saved me, it is true, from death—but life is a worse curse."

"Young man—no! moments in life are agony, but life itself is a blessing. Life is a mystery that defies all calculation. You can never say, 'To-day is wretched, therefore to-morrow must be the same!' And for the loss of a little gold you, in the full vigor of youth, with all the future before you, will dare to rush into the chances of eternity! You, who have never, perhaps, thought what eternity is! Yet," added the stranger, in a soft and melancholy voice, "you are young and beautiful—perhaps the pride and hope of others! Have you no tie—no affection—no kindred? are you lord of yourself?"

Legard was moved by the tone of the stranger, as well as by the words.

"It is not the loss of money," said he, gloomily, "it is the loss of honor. To-morrow I must go forth a shunned and despised man—I, a gentleman and a soldier! They may insult me—and I have no reply!"

The Englishman seemed to muse, for his brow lowered, and he made no answer. Legard threw himself back, overcome with his own excitement, and wept like a child. The stranger, who imagined himself above the indulgence of emotion (vain man!) woke from his revery at this burst of passion. He gazed at first (I grieve to write) with a curl of the haughty lip that had in it contempt: but it passed quickly away; and the hard man remembered that he too had been young and weak, and his own errors greater perhaps than those of the one he had ventured to despise. He walked to and fro the room still without speaking. At last he approached the gamester, and took his hand.

"What is your debt?" he asked gently.

"What matters it?—more than I can pay."

"If life is a trust, so is wealth: *you* have the first in charge for others—*I* may have the last. What is the debt?"

Legard started—it was a strong struggle between shame and hope. "If I could borrow it, I could repay it hereafter—I know I could—I would not think of it otherwise."

"Very well, so be it—I will lend you the money, on one condition. Solemnly promise me, on your faith as a soldier and a gentleman, that you will not, for ten years to come—even if you grow rich, and can ruin others—touch card or dice-box. Promise me that you will shun all gaming for gain, under whatever disguise—whatever appellation. I will take your word as my bond."

Legard, overjoyed, and scarcely trusting his senses, gave the promise.

"Sleep, then, to-night, in hope and assurance of the morrow," said the Englishman: "let this event be an omen to you, that while there is a future there is no despair. One word more—I do not want your thanks; it is easy to be generous at the expense of justice. Perhaps I have been so now. This sum, which is to save your life—a life you so little value—might have blessed fifty human beings—better men than either the giver or receiver. What is given to error, may perhaps be a wrong to virtue. When you would ask others to support a career of blind and selfish extravagance, pause and think over the breadless lips this wasted gold would have fed!—the joyless hearts it would have comforted! You talk of repaying me: if the occasion offer, do so; if not—if we never meet again, and you have it in your power, pay it for me to the Poor! And now, farewell."

"Stay—give me the name of my preserver! Mine is"——

"Hush! what matter names? This is a sacrifice we have both made to honor. You will sooner recover your self-esteem (and without self-esteem there is neither faith nor honor), when you think that your family, your connections, are spared all association with your own error; that I may hear them spoken of—that I may mix with them without fancying that they owe me gratitude."

"Your own name, then?" said Legard, deeply penetrated with the delicate generosity of his benefactor.

"Tush!" muttered the stranger, inpatiently, as he closed the door.

The next morning, when he woke, Legard saw upon the table a small packet—it contained a sum that exceeded the debt named. On the envelope was written, "Remember the bond."

The stranger had already quitted Venice. He had not travelled through the Italian cities under his own name, for he had just returned from the solitudes of the East, and not yet hardened to the publicity of the gossip which in towns haunted by his countrymen attended a well-known name: that given to Legard by the innkeeper, mutilated by Italian pronunciation, the young man had never heard before, and soon forgot. He paid his debts, and he scrupulously kept his word. The adventure of that night went far, indeed, to reform and ennoble the mind and habits of George Legard. Time passed, and he never met his benefactor, till in the halls of Burleigh he recognized the stranger in Maltravers.

CHAPTER VII.

"Why value, then, that strength of mind they boast,
As often varying, and as often lost?"
—HAWKINS BROWNE (*translated by* SOAME JENYNS).

MALTRAVERS was lying at length, with his dogs around him, under a beech-tree that threw its arms over one of the calm still pieces of water that relieved the groves of Burleigh, when Colonel Legard spied him from the bridle road, which led through the park to the house. The colonel dismounted, threw the rein over his arm; and at the sound of the hoofs Maltravers turned, saw the visitor, and rose; he held out his hand to Legard, and immediately began talking of indifferent matters.

Legard was embarrassed, but his nature was not one to profit by the silence of a benefactor. "Mr. Maltravers," said he, with graceful emotion, "though you have not yet allowed me an opportunity to allude to it, do not think I am ungrateful for the service you rendered me."

Maltravers looked grave, but made no reply. Legard resumed, with a heightened color.

"I cannot say how I regret that it is not yet in my power to discharge my debt; but——"

"When it is, you will do so. Pray think no more of it. Are you going to the rectory?"

"No, not this morning; in fact, I leave B——shire to-morrow. Pleasant Family, the Mertons."

"And Miss Cameron——?"

"Is certainly beautiful—and very rich. How could she ever think of marrying Lord Vargrave—so much older!—she who could have so many admirers?"

"Not, surely, while betrothed to another?"

This was a refinement which Legard, though an honorable man as men go, did not quite understand. "Oh," said he, "that was by some eccentric old relation—her father-in-law, I think. Do you think she is bound by such an engagement?"

Maltravers made no reply, but amused himself by throwing a stick into the water, and sending one of his dogs after it,

Legard looked on, and his affectionate disposition yearned to make advances which something distant in the manner of Maltravers chilled and repelled.

When Legard was gone, Maltravers followed him with his eyes. "And this is the man whom Cleveland thinks Evelyn could love! I could forgive her marrying Vargrave. Independently of the conscientious feeling that may belong to the engagement, Vargrave has wit, talent, intellect; and this man has nothing but the skin of the panther. Was I wrong to save him? No. Every human life, I suppose, has its uses. But Evelyn—I could despise her, if her heart was the fool of the eye!"

These comments were most uujust to Legard; but they were just of that kind of injustice which the man of talent often commits against the man of external advantages, and which the latter still more often retaliates on the man of talent. As Maltravers thus solilquized, he was accosted by Mr. Cleveland.

"Come, Ernest, you must not cut these unfortunate Mertons any longer. If you continue to do so, do you know what Mrs. Hare and the world will say?"

"No.—What?"

"That you have been refused by Miss Merton."

"That *would* be a calumny!" said Ernest, smiling.

"Or that you are hopelessly in love with Miss Cameron."

Maltravers started—his proud heart swelled—he pulled his hat over his brows, and said, after a short pause—

"Well, Mrs. Hare and the world must not have it all their own way; and so, whenever you go to the rectory, take me with you."

CHAPTER VIII.

* * * "The more he strove
To advance his suit, the farther from her love."
—DRYDEN: *Theodore and Honoria.*

THE line of conduct which Vargrave now adopted with regard to Evelyn was craftily conceived and carefully pursued. He did not hazard a single syllable which might draw on him a rejection of his claims; but, at the same time, no lover could be more constant, more devoted, in attentions. In the presence of others there was an air of familiar intimacy, that seemed to arrogate a right, which to her he scrupulously shunned to assert. Nothing could be more respectful, nay, more timid, than his language, or more calmly confident than his manner. Not having much vanity, nor any very acute self-conceit, he did not delude himself into the idea of winning Evelyn's affections; he rather sought to entangle her judgment—to weave around her web upon web—not the less dangerous for being invisible. He took the compact as a matter of course—as something not to be broken by any possible chance; her hand was to be his as a right: it was her heart that he so anxiously sought to gain! But this distinction was so delicately drawn, and insisted upon so little in any tangible form, that, whatever Evelyn's wishes for an understanding, a much more experienced woman would have been at a loss to ripen one.

Evelyn longed to confide in Caroline—to consult her. But Caroline, though still kind, had grown distant. "I wish," said Evelyn, one night as she sate in Caroline's dressing-room—"I wish that I knew what tone to take with Lord Vargrave. I feel more and more convinced that an union between us is impossible; and yet, precisely because he does not press it, am I unable to tell him so. I wish you could undertake that task; you seem such friends with him."

"I!" said Caroline, changing countenance.

"Yes, you! Nay, do not blush, or shall I think you envy me. Could you not save us both from the pain that otherwise must come, sooner or later?"

"Lord Vargrave would not thank me for such an act of friendship. Besides, Evelyn, consider—it is scarcely possible to break off this engagement *now*."

"*Now!*" and why now?" said Evelyn, astonished.

"The world believes it so implicitly—observe whoever sits next you rises if Lord Vargrave approaches: the neighborhood talk of nothing else but your marriage; and your fate, Evelyn, is not pitied."

"I will leave this place—I will go back to

the cottage—I cannot bear this!" said Evelyn, passionately wringing her hands.

"You do not love another, I am sure; not young Mr. Hare, with his green coat, and and straw-colored whiskers; nor Sir Henry Foxglove, with his how-d'ye-do like a view-halloo; perhaps, indeed, Colonel Legard—he is handsome. What! do you blush at his name? No; you say 'not Legard:' who else is there?"

"You are cruel—you trifle with me!" said Evelyn, in tearful reproach; and she rose to go to her own room.

"My dear girl!" said Caroline, touched by her evident pain; "learn from me—if I may say so—that marriages are *not* made in heaven; yours will be as fortunate as earth can bestow. A love-match is usually the least happy of all. Our foolish sex demand so much in love; and love, after all, is but one blessing among many. Wealth and rank remain when love is but a heap of ashes. For my part, I have chosen my destiny and my husband."

"Your husband!"

"Yes! you see him in Lord Doltimore. I dare say we shall be as happy as any amorous Corydon and Phillis." But there was irony in Caroline's voice as she spoke; and she sighed heavily. Evelyn did not believe her serious; and the friends parted for the night.

"Mine is a strange fate!" said Caroline to herself; "I am asked by the man whom I love, and who professes to love me, to bestow myself on another, and to plead for him to a younger and fairer bride. Well, I will obey him in the first; the last is a bitterer task, and I cannot perform it earnestly. Yet Vargrave has a strange power over me; and when I look round the world, I see that he is right. In these most commonplace artifices, there is yet a wild majesty that charms and fascinates me. It is something to rule the world; and his and mine are natures formed to do so."

CHAPTER IX.

"A smoke raised with the fume of sighs."
—*Romeo and Juliet.*

IT is certain that Evelyn experienced for Maltravers sentiments which, if not love, might easily be mistaken for it. But whether it were that master-passion, or merely its fanciful resemblance,—love, in early youth and innocent natures, if of sudden growth, is long before it makes itself apparent. Evelyn had been prepared to feel an interest in her solitary neighbor. His mind, as developed in his works, had half formed her own. Her childish adventure with the stranger had never been forgotten. Her present knowledge of Maltravers was an union of dangerous and often opposite associations—the Ideal and the Real.

Love, in its first dim and imperfect shape, is but imagination concentrated on one object. It is a genius of the heart resembling that of the intellect; it appeals to, it stirs up, it evokes the sentiments and sympathies that lie most latent in our nature. Its sigh is the spirit that moves over the ocean, and arouses the Anadyomene into life. Therefore is it that MIND produces affections deeper than those of external form; therefore it is that women are worshippers of glory, which is the palpable and visible representative of a genius whose operations they cannot always comprehend. Genius has so much in common with love—the imagination that animates one is so much the property of the other—that there is not a surer sign of the existence of genius than the love that it creates and bequeaths. It penetrates deeper than the reason—it binds a nobler captive than the fancy. As the sun upon the dial, it gives to the human heart both its shadow and its light. Nations are its worshippers and wooers; and Posterity learns from its oracles to dream, to aspire, to adore!

Had Maltravers declared the passion that consumed him, it is probable that it would soon have kindled a return. But his frequent absence, his sustained distance of manner, had served to repress the feelings that in a young and virgin heart rarely flow with much force, until they are invited and aroused. *Le besoin d'aimer* in girls, is, perhaps, in itself powerful; but it is fed by another want, *le besoin d'être aimée! If*, therefore, Evelyn, at present, felt love for Maltravers, the love had certainly not passed into the core of life: the tree had not so far struck its roots but what it might have borne transplanting. There was in her enough of the pride of sex to have recoiled from the thought of giving love to one who had not asked the treasure. Capable of attachment, more trustful, and therefore, if less vehement,

more beautiful and durable than that which had animated the brief tragedy of Florence Lascelles, she could not have been the unknown correspondent, or revealed the soul, because the features wore a mask.

It must also be allowed that, in some respects, Evelyn was too young and inexperienced thoroughly to appreciate all that was most truly loveable and attractive in Maltravers. At four-and-twenty she would, perhaps, have felt no fear mingled with her respect for him; but seventeen and six-and-thirty is a wide interval! She never felt that there was that difference in years until she had met Legard, and then at once she comprehended it. With Legard she had moved on equal terms; he was not too wise—too high for her every-day thoughts. He less excited her imagination—less attracted her reverence. But, somehow or other, that voice which proclaimed her power, those eyes which never turned from hers, went nearer to her heart. As Evelyn had once said to Caroline, "It was a great enigma!"—her own feelings were a mystery to her; and she reclined by the "Golden Waterfalls" without tracing her likeness in the glass of the pool below.

Maltravers appeared again at the rectory, He joined their parties by day, and his evenings were spent with them as of old. In this I know not precisely what were his motives—perhaps he did not know them himself. It might be that his pride was roused;—it might be that he could not endure the notion that Lord Vargrave should guess his secret, by an absence almost otherwise unaccountable; he could not patiently bear to give Vargrave that triumph;—it might be that, in the sternness of his self-esteem, he imagined he had already conquered all save affectionate interest in Evelyn's fate, and trusted too vainly to his own strength;—and it might be, also, that he could not resist the temptation of seeing if Evelyn were contented with her lot, and if Vargrave were worthy of the blessing that awaited him. Whether one of these, or all united, made him resolve to brave his danger—or whether, after all, he yielded to a weakness, or consented to what—invited by Evelyn herself—was almost a social necessity, the reader, and not the narrator, shall decide.

Legard was gone; but Doltimore remained in the neighborhood, having hired a hunting-box not far from Sir John Merton's manors, over which he easily obtained permission to sport. When he did not dine elsewhere, there was always a place for him at the parson's hospitable board—and that place was generally next to Caroline. Mr. and Mrs. Merton had given up all hope of Mr. Maltravers for their eldest daughter; and, very strangely, this conviction came upon their minds in the first day they made the acquaintance of the young lord.

"My dear," said the rector; as he was winding up his watch, preparatory to entering the connubial couch—"my dear, I don't think Mr. Maltravers is a marrying man."

"I was just going to make the same remark," said Mrs. Merton, drawing the clothes over her. "Lord Doltimore is a very fine young man—his estates unencumbered. I like him vastly, my love. He is evidently smitten with Caroline: so Lord Vargrave and Mrs. Hare said."

"Sensible, shrewd woman, Mrs. Hare. By the by, we'll send her a pine-apple. Caroline was made to be a woman of rank!"

"Quite; so much self-possession!"

"And if Mr. Maltravers would sell or let Burleigh!"—

"It would be so pleasant!"

"Had you not better give Caroline a hint?"

"My love, she is so sensible, let her go her own way."

"You are right, my dear Betsy; I shall always say that no one has more common sense than you; you have brought up your children admirably!"

"Dear Charles!"

"It is coldish to-night, love," said the rector; and he put out the candle.

From that time, it was not the fault of Mr. and Mrs. Merton if Lord Doltimore did not find their house the pleasantest in the county.

One evening the rectory party were assembled together in the cheerful drawing-room. Cleveland, Mr. Merton, Sir John—and Lord Vargrave reluctantly compelled to make up the fourth—were at the whist-table; Evelyn, Caroline, and Lord Doltimore, were seated round the fire, and Mrs. Merton was working a footstool. The fire burned clear—the curtains were down—the children in bed: it was a family picture of elegant comfort.

Mr. Maltravers was announced.

"I am glad you are come at last," said Caroline, holding out her fair hand. "Mr. Cleveland could not answer for you. We are all disputing as to which mode of life is the happiest."

"And your opinion?" asked Maltravers, seating himself in the vacant chair—it chanced to be next to Evelyn's.

"My opinion is decidedly in favor of London. A metropolitan life, with its perpetual and graceful excitements;—the best music—the best companions—the best things, in short. Provincial life is so dull, its pleasures so tiresome; to talk over the last year's news, and wear out one's last year's dresses: cultivate a conservatory, and play Pope Joan with a young party. Dreadful!"

"I agree with Miss Merton," said Lord Doltimore, solemnly; "not but what I like the country for three or four months in the year, with good shooting and hunting, and a large house properly filled—independent of one's own neighborhood: but if I am condemned to choose one place to live in, give me Paris."

"Ah! Paris; I never was in Paris, I should so like to travel!" said Caroline.

"But the inns abroad are so very bad," said Lord Doltimore; "how people can rave about Italy, I can't think. I never suffered so much in my life as I did in Calabria; and at Venice I was bit to death by mosquitoes. Nothing like Paris, I assure you: don't you think so, Mr. Maltravers?"

"Perhaps I shall be able to answer you better in a short time. I think of accompanying Mr. Cleveland to Paris."

"Indeed!" said Caroline. "Well, I envy you; but it is a sudden resolution?"

"Not very."

"Do you stay long?" asked Lord Doltimore.

"My stay is uncertain."

"And you won't let Burleigh in the meanwhile?"

"*Let* Burleigh? No; if it once pass from my hands it will be for ever!"

Maltravers spoke gravely, and the subject was changed. Lord Doltimore challenged Caroline to chess.

They sate down, and Lord Doltimore arranged the pieces.

"Sensible man, Mr. Maltravers," said the young lord; "but I don't hit it off with him: Vargrave is more agreeable. Don't you think so?"

"Y—e—s."

"Lord Vargrave is very kind to me; I never remember any one being more so;—got Legard that appointment solely because it would please *me*—very friendly fellow! I mean to put myself under his wing next session!"

"You could not do better, I'm sure," said Caroline; "he is so much looked up to—I dare say he will be prime minister one of these days."

"I take the bishop:—do you think so really?—you are rather a politician?"

"Oh no; not much of that. But my father and my uncle are staunch politicians; gentlemen know so much more than ladies. We should always go by their opinions. I think I will take the queen's pawn—your politics are the same as Lord Vargrave's?"

"Yes, I fancy so: at least I shall leave my proxy with him. Glad you don't like politics—great bore."

"Why, so young, so connected as you are——" Caroline stopped short, and made a wrong move.

"I wish we were going to Paris together, *we* should enjoy it so;"—and Lord Doltimore's knight checked the tower and queen.

Caroline coughed, and stretched her hand quickly to move.

"Pardon me, you will lose the game if you do so!" and Doltimore placed his hand on hers—their eyes met—Caroline turned away, and Lord Doltimore settled his right collar.

"And is it true? are you really going to leave us?" said Evelyn;—and she felt very sad. But still the sadness might not be that of love;—she had felt sad after Legard had gone.

"I do not think I shall long stay away," said Maltravers, trying to speak indifferently. "Burleigh has become more dear to me than it was in earlier youth; perhaps, because I have made myself duties there: and in other places, I am but an isolated and useless unit in the great mass."

"You!—every where, you must have occupations and resources—every where, you must find yourself not alone. But you will not go yet?"

"Not yet; no. (Evelyn's spirits rose).

Have you read the book I sent you?" (it was one of De Staël's).

"Yes; but it disappoints me."

"And why? it is eloquent?"

"But is it true? is there so much melancholy in life? are the affections so full of bitterness? For me, I am so happy when with those I love! When I am with my mother, the air seems more fragrant—the skies more blue: it is surely not affection, but the absence of it that makes us melancholy!"

"Perhaps so; but if we had never known affection, we might not miss it: and the brilliant Frenchwoman speaks from memory; while you speak from hope—Memory, which is the ghost of joy: yet surely, even in the indulgence of affection, there is at times a certain melancholy—a certain fear. Have you never felt it, even with—with your mother!"

"Ah, yes! when she suffered, or when I have thought she loved me less than I desired."

"That must have been an idle and vain thought. Your mother! does she resemble you?"

"I wish I could think so. Oh, if you knew her! I have longed so often that you were acquainted wirh each other! It was she who taught me to sing your songs.

"My dear Mrs. Hare, we may as well throw up our cards," said the keen clear voice of Lord Vargrave: "you have played most admirably, and I know that your last card will be the ace of trumps; still the luck is against us."

"No, no; pray play it out, my lord."

"Quite useless, ma'am," said Sir John showing two honors. "We have only the trick to make."

"Quite useless," echoed Lumley, tossing down his sovereigns, and rising with a careless yawn.

"How d'ye do, Maltravers?"

Maltravers rose; and Vargrave turned to Evelyn, and addressed her in a whisper. The proud Maltravers walked away, and suppressed a sigh; a moment more, and he saw Lord Vargrave occupying the chair he had left vacant. He laid his hand on Cleveland's shoulder.

"The carriage is waiting—are you ready?"

CHAPTER X.

"Obscuris vera involvens." *—VIRGIL.

A DAY or two after the date of the last chapter, Evelyn and Caroline were riding out with Lord Vargrave and Mr. Merton, and on returning home they passed through the village of Burleigh.

"Maltravers, I suppose, has an eye to the county, one of these days," said Lord Vargrave, who honestly fancied that a man's eyes were always directed towards something for his own interest or advancement; "otherwise he could not surely take all this trouble about workhouses and paupers. Who could ever have imagined my romantic friend would sink into a country squire?"

"It is astonishing what talent and energy he throws into everything he attempts," said the parson. "One could not, indeed, have supposed that a man of genius could make a man of business."

"Flattering to your humble servant—whom all the world allow to be the last, and deny to be the first. But your remark shows what a sad possession genius is; like the rest of the world, you fancy that it cannot be of the least possible use. If a man is called a genius, it means that he is to be thrust out of all the good things in this life. He is not fit for any thing but a garret! Put a *genius* into office!—make a *genius* a bishop! or a lord chancellor!—the world would be turned topsy-turvy! You see that you are quite astonished that a genius can be even a county magistrate, and know the difference between a spade and a poker! In fact, a genius is supposed to be the most ignorant, impracticable, good-for-nothing, do-nothing, sort of thing that ever walked upon two legs. Well, when I began life, I took excellent care that nobody should take *me* for a genius; and it is only within the last year or two that I have ventured to emerge a little out of my shell. I have not been the better for it; I was getting on faster while I was merely a plodder. The world is so fond of that droll fable, the hare and the tortoise—it really believes because (I suppose the fable to be true!) a tortoise *once* beat a hare, that all tortoises are much better runners than hares possibly can be. Mediocre men have

* Wrapping truth in obscurity.

the monopoly of the loaves and fishes; and even when talent does rise in life, it is a talent which only differs from mediocrity by being more energetic and bustling."

"You are bitter, Lord Vargrave," said Caroline, laughing; "yet surely you have had no reason to complain of the non-appreciation of talent?"

"Humph! if I had had a grain more talent I should have been crushed by it. There is a subtle allegory in the story of the lean poet, who put *lead* in his pocket to prevent being blown away! *Mais à nos moutons*—to return to Maltravers. Let us suppose that he was merely clever—had not had a particle of what is called genius—been merely a hard-working able gentleman, of good character and fortune—he might be half way up the hill by this time;—whereas now, what is he? Less before the public than he was at twenty-eight—a discontented anchorite, a meditative idler."

"No, not that," said Evelyn, warmly, and then checked herself.

Lord Vargrave looked at her sharply; but his knowledge of life told him that Legard was a much more dangerous rival than Maltravers. Now and then, it is true, a suspicion to the contrary crossed him; but it did not take root and become a serious apprehension. Still he did not quite like the tone of voice in which Evelyn had put her abrupt negative, and said, with a slight sneer,

"If not that, what is he?"

"One who purchased, by the noblest exertions, the right to be idle," said Evelyn, with spirit; "and whom genius itself will not suffer to be idle long."

"Besides," said Mr. Merton, "he has won a high reputation, which he cannot lose merely by not seeking to increase it."

"Reputation!—oh yes!—we give men like that—men of genius—a large property in the clouds, in order to justify ourselves in pushing them out of our way below. But if they are contented with fame, why they deserve their fate. Hang fame—give me power."

"And there no power in genius?" said Evelyn, with deepening fervor; "no power over the mind, and the heart, and the thought; no power over its own time—over posterity—over nations yet uncivilized—races yet unborn?"

This burst from one so simple and young as Evelyn seemed to Vargrave so surprising, that he stared on her without saying a word.

"You will laugh at my championship," she added, with a blush and a smile; "but you provoked the encounter."

"And you have won the battle," said Vargrave, with prompt gallantry. "My charming ward, every day developes in you some new gift of nature!"

Caroline, with a movement of impatience, put her horse into a canter.

Just at this time, from a cross-road, emerged a horseman—it was Maltravers. The party halted—salutations were exchanged.

"I suppose you have been enjoying the sweet business of squiredom," said Vargrave, gaily: "Atticus and his farm—classical associations! Charming weather for the agriculturists, eh!—what news about corn and barley? I suppose our English habit of talking on the weather arose when we were all a squirearchal, farming, George the Third kind of people! Weather is really a serious matter to gentlemen who are interested in beans and vetches, wheat and hay. You hang your happiness upon the changes of the moon!"

"As you upon the smiles of a minister. The weather of a court is more capricious than that of the skies; at least we are better husbandmen than you who sow the wind and reap the whirlwind."

"Well retorted, and really, when I look round, I am half inclined to envy you. Were I not Vargrave, I would be Maltravers."

It was, indeed, a scene that seemed quiet and serene with the English union of the Feudal and the Pastoral life: the village-green, with its trim scattered cottages—the fields and pastures that spread beyond—the turf of the park behind, broken by the shadows of the unequal grounds, with its mounds, and hollows, and venerable groves, from which rose the turrets of the old hall, its mullion windows gleaming in the western sun;—a scene that preached tranquility and content, and might have been equally grateful to humble philosophy and hereditary pride.

"I never saw any place so peculiar in its character as Burleigh," said the rector; "the old seats left to us in England are chiefly those of our great nobles. It is so rare to see one that does not aspire beyond the residence

of a private gentleman preserve all the relics of the Tudor age."

"I think," said Vargrave, turning to Evelyn, "that as by my uncle's will, your fortune is to be laid out in the purchase of land, we could not find a better investment than Burleigh. So, whenever you are inclined to sell, Maltravers, I think we must outbid Doltimore. What say you, my fair ward?"

"Leave Burleigh in peace, I beseech you!" said Maltravers, angrily.

"That is said like a Digby," returned Vargrave. "*Allons!*—will you not come home with us?"

'I thank you—not to-day."

"We meet at Lord Raby's next Thursday. It is a ball given almost wholly in honor of your return to Burleigh; we are all going—it is my young cousin's *début* at Knaresdean. We have all an interest in her conquests."

Now, as Maltravers looked up to answer, he caught Evelyn's glance, and his voice faltered.

"Yes," he said, "we shall meet — once again. Adieu!" He wheeled round his horse, and they separated.

"I can bear this no more," said Maltravers to himself; "I overrated my strength. To see her thus day after day, and to know her another's—to writhe beneath his calm, unconscious assertion of his rights. Happy Vargrave!—and yet, ah! will *she* be happy?—Oh! could I think so!"

Thus soliloquizing, he suffered the rein to fall on the neck of his horse, which paced slowly home through the village, till it stopped—as if in the mechanism of custom—at the door of a cottage, a stone's throw from the lodge. At this door, indeed, for several successive days, had Maltravers stopped regularly; it was now tenanted by the poor woman, his introduction to whom has been before narrated. She had recovered from the immediate effects of the injury she had sustained; but her constitution, greatly broken by previous suffering and exhaustion, had received a mortal shock. She was hurt inwardly; and the surgeon informed Maltravers that she had not many months to live. He had placed her under the roof of one of his favorite cottagers, where she received all the assistance and alleviation that careful nursing and medical advice could give her.

This poor woman, whose name was Sarah Elton, interested Maltravers much; she had known better days: there was a certain propriety in her expressions which denoted an education superior to her circumstances; and what touched Maltravers most, she seemed far more to feel her husband's death than her own sufferings; which, somehow or other, is not common with widows the other side of forty! We say that youth easily consoles itself for the robberies of the grave—middle age is a still better self-comforter. When Mrs. Elton found herself installed in the cottage, she looked round and burst into tears.

"And William is not here!" she said. "Friends—friends! if we had had but one such friend before he died!"

Maltravers was pleased that her first thought was rather that of sorrow for the dead, than of gratitue for the living. Yet Mrs. Elton was grateful—simply, honestly, deeply grateful; her manner, her voice, betokened it. And she seemed so glad when her benefactor called to speak kindly, and inquire cordially, that Maltravers did so constantly; at first, from a compassionate, and at last, from a selfish motive—for who is not pleased to give pleasure? And Maltravers had so few in the world to care for him, that perhaps he was flattered by the grateful respect of this humble stranger.

When his horse stopped, the cottager's daughter opened the door and curtsied—it was an invitation to enter; and he threw his rein over the paling and walked into the cottage.

Mrs. Elton, who had been seated by the open casement, rose to receive him. But Maltravers made her sit down, and soon put her at her ease. The woman and her daughter who occupied the cottage retired into the garden; and Mrs. Elton, watching them withdraw, then exclaimed abruptly—

"Oh, sir! I have so longed to see you this morning. I so long to make bold to ask you whether, indeed, I dreamed it—or did I, when you first took me to your house—did I see ——" She stopped abruptly: and, though she strove to suppress her emotion, it was too strong for her efforts—she sunk back on her chair, pale as death, and almost gasped for breath.

Maltravers waited in surprise for her recovery.

"I beg pardon, sir—I was thinking of days long past; and—that I wished to ask whether, when I lay in your hall, almost insensible, any one besides yourself and your servants were present?—or was it"—added the woman with a shudder—"was it the dead?"

"I remember," said Maltravers, much struck and interested in her question and manner, "that a lady was present."

"It is so—it is so!" cried the woman, half-rising and clasping her hands. "And she passed by this cottage a little time ago; her veil was thrown aside as she turned that fair young face towards the cottage. Her name, sir—oh! what is her name? It was the same—the same face that shone across me in that hour of pain! I did not dream! I was not mad!"

Compose yourself; you could never; I think, have seen that lady before: her name is Cameron."

"Cameron—Cameron!"—the woman shook her head mournfully. "No; that name is strange to me: and her mother, sir—she is dead?"

"No; her mother lives."

A shade came over the face of the sufferer; and he said, after a pause,

My eyes deceive me then, sir; and, indeed, I feel that my head is touched, and I wander sometimes. But the likeness was so great; yet that young lady is even lovlier!"

"Likenesses are very deceitful, and very capricious; and depend more on fancy than reality. One person discovers a likeness between faces most dissimilar, a likeness invisible to others. But who does Miss Cameron resemble?"

"One now dead, sir; dead many years ago. But it is a long story, and one that lies heavy on my conscience. Some day or other, if you will give me leave, sir, I will unburden myself to you."

"If I can assist you in any way, command me. Meanwhile, have you no friends, no relations, no children, whom you would wish to see?"

"Children!—no, sir; I never had but one child of *my own*" (she laid an emphasis on the last words), "and that died in a foreign land!"

"And no other relatives?"

"None, sir. My history is very short and simple. I was well brought up—an only child. My father was a small farmer; he died when I was sixteen, and I went into service with a kind old lady and her daughter, who treated me more as a companion than a servant. I was a vain, giddy girl then, sir. A young man, the son of a neighboring farmer, courted me, and I was much attached to him; but neither of us had money, and his parents would not give their consent to our marrying. I was silly enough to think that, if William loved me, he should have braved all; and his prudence mortified me; so I married another whom I did not love. I was rightly punished, for he ill-used me, and took to drinking; I returned to my old service to escape from him—for I was with child and my life was in danger from his violence. He died suddenly, and in debt. And then, afterwards, a gentleman—a rich gentleman—to whom I rendered a service (do not misunderstand me, sir, if I say the service was one of which I repent), gave me money, and made me rich enough to marry my first lover; and William and I went to America. We lived many years in New York upon our little fortune comfortably; and I was a long while happy, for I had always loved William dearly. My first affliction was the death of my child by my first husband; but I was soon roused from my grief. William schemed and speculated, as everybody does in America, and so we lost all: and William was weakly and could not work. At length he got the place of steward on board a vessel from New York to Liverpool, and I was taken to assist in the cabin. We wanted to come to London: I thought my old benefactor might do something for us, though he had never answered the letters I had sent him. But poor William fell ill on board, and died in sight of land."

Mrs. Elton wept bitterly, but with the subdued grief of one to whom tears have been familiar; and when she recovered, she soon brought her humble tale to an end. She herself, incapacitated from all work by sorrow and a breaking consitution, was left in the streets of Liverpool without other means of subsistence than the charitable contributions of the passengers and sailors on board the vessel. With this sum she had gone to London, where she found her old patron had been long since dead, and she had no claims on his family.

She had, on quitting England, left one relation settled in a town in the North; thither she now repaired, to find her last hope wrecked; the relation also was dead and gone. Her money was now spent, and she had begged her way along the road, or through the lanes, she scarce knew whither, till the accident, which in shortening her life, had raised up a friend for its close.

"And such, sir," said she in conclusion, "such has been the story of my life, except one part of it, which, if I get stronger, I can tell better; but you will excuse that now."

"And are you comfortable and contented, my poor friend? These people are kind to you?"

"Oh, so kind!—and every night we all pray for you, sir; you ought to be happy, if the blessings of the poor can avail the rich."

Maltravers remounted his horse and sought his home; and his heart was lighter than before he entered that cottage. But at evening Cleveland talked of Vargrave and Evelyn, and the good fortune of one, and the charms of the other; and the wound, so well concealed, bled afresh.

"I heard from De Montaigne the other day," said Ernest, just as they were retiring for the night, "and his letter decides my movements. If you will accept me, then, as a travelling companion, I will go with you to Paris. Have you made up your mind to leave Burleigh on Saturday?"

"Yes; that gives us a day to recover from Lord Raby's ball. I am so delighted at your offer!—we need only stay a day or so in town. The excursion will do you good—your spirits, my dear Ernest, seem more dejected than when you first returned to England: you live too much alone here; you will enjoy Burleigh more on your return. And perhaps then you will open the old house a little more to the neighborhood, and to your friends. They expect it: you are looked to for the county."

"I have done with politics, and sicken but for peace."

"Pick up a wife in Paris, and you will then know that peace is an impossible possession," said the old bachelor laughing.

BOOK FIFTH.

Νήπιοι· οὐδ' ἴασιν ὅσῳ πλέον ἥμισυ παντὸς.—HES. Op. et Dies, 4.

Fools blind to truth; nor know their erring soul
How much the half is better than the whole.

CHAPTER I.

"Do, as the Heavens have done; forget your evil;
With them, forgive yourself."—*The Winter's Tale.*

". . . The sweet'st companion, that e'er man
Bred his hopes out of."—*Ibid.*

THE curate of Brook Green was sitting outside his door. The vicarage which he inhabited was a straggling, irregular, but picturesque building; humble enough to suit the means of the curate, yet large enough to accommodate the vicar. It had been built in an age when the *indigentes et pauperes* for whom universities were founded supplied, more than they do now, the fountains of the Christian ministry—when pastor and flock were more on an equality.

From under a rude and arched porch, with an oaken settle on either side for the poor visitor, the door opened at once upon the old-fashioned parlor — a homely but pleasant room, with one wide but low cottage casement, beneath which stood the dark shining table, that supported the large Bible in its green baize cover; the Concordance, and the last Sunday's sermon, in its jetty case. There by the fire-place stood the bachelor's round elbow chair, with a needle-work cushion at the back; a walnut-tree bureau; another table or two; half a dozen plain chairs constituted the rest of the furniture, saving some two or three hundred volumes, ranged in neat shelves on the clean wainscoted walls. There was another room, to which you ascended by two steps, communicating with this parlor, smaller, but finer, and inhabited only on festive days, when Lady Vargrave, or some other quiet neighbor, came to drink tea with the good curate.

An old housekeeper and her grandson—a young fellow of about two-and-twenty, who tended the garden, milked the cow, and did in fact what he was wanted to do—composed the establishment of the humble minister.

We have digressed from Mr. Aubrey himself.

The curate was seated, then, one fine summer morning, on a bench at the left of his porch, screened from the sun by the cool boughs of a chestnut-tree, the shadow of which half covered the little lawn that separated the precincts of the house from those of silent Death and everlasting Hope; above the irregular and moss grown paling rose the village church; and, through openings in the trees, beyond the burial-ground, partially gleamed the white walls of Lady Vargrave's cottage, and were seen at a distance the sails on the

"Mighty waters rolling evermore."

The old man was calmly enjoying the beauty of the morning, the freshness of the air, the warmth of the dancing beam, and not least, perhaps, his own peaceful thoughts, the spontaneous children of a contemplative spirit and a quiet conscience. His was the age when we most sensitively enjoy the mere sense of existence; when the face of Nature, and a passive conviction of the benevolence of our Great Father, suffice to create a serene and ineffable happiness, which rarely visits us till we have done with the passions; till memories, if more alive than heretofore, are yet mellowed in the hues of time, and Faith softens into harmony all their asperities and harshness; till nothing within us remains to cast a shadow over the things without; and on the verge of

life, the Angels are nearer to us than of yore. There is an old age which has more youth of heart than youth itself!

As the old man thus sate, the little gate through which, on Sabbath days, he was wont to pass from the humble mansion to the house of God, noiselessly opened, and Lady Vargrave appeared.

The curate rose when he perceived her; and the lady's fair features were lighted up with a gentle pleasure, as she pressed his hand and returned his salutation.

There was a peculiarity in Lady Vargrave's countenance which I have rarely seen in others. Her smile, which was singularly expressive, came less from the lip than from the eyes; it was almost as if the brow smiled—it was as the sudden and momentary vanishing of a light but melancholy cloud that usually rested upon the features, placid as they were.

They sate down on the rustic bench, and the sea-breeze wantoned amongst the quivering leaves of the chestnut-tree that overhung their seat.

"I have come, as usual, to consult my kind friend," said Lady Vargrave; "and, as usual also, it is about our absent Evelyn."

"Have you heard again from her, this morning?"

"Yes; and her letter increases the anxiety which your observation, so much deeper than mine, first awakened."

Does she then write much of Lord Vargrave?"

"Not a great deal; but the little she does say, betrays how much she shrinks from the union my poor husband desired: more, indeed, than ever! But this is not all, nor the worst: for you know, that the late lord had provided against that probability—(he loved her so tenderly, his ambition for her only came from his affection);—and the letter he left behind him pardons and releases her, if she revolts from the choice he himself preferred."

"Lord Vargrave is perhaps a generous, he certainly seems a candid, man, and he must be sensible that his uncle has already done all that justice required."

"I think so. But this, as I said, is not all; I have brought the letter to show you. It seems to me as you apprehended. This Mr. Maltravers has wound himself about her thoughts more than she herself imagines; you see how she dwells on all that concerns him, and how, after checking herself, she returns again and again to the same subject."

The curate put on his spectacles, and took the letter. It was a strange thing, that old gray-haired minister evincing such grave interest in the secrets of that young heart! But they who would take charge of the soul, must never be too wise to regard the heart!

Lady Vargrave looked over his shoulder as he bent down to read, and at times placed her finger on such passages as she wished him to note. The old curate nodded as she did so; but neither spoke till the letter was concluded.

The curate then folded up the epistle, took off his spectacles, hemmed, and looked grave.

"Well," said Lady Vargrave, anxiously, "well?"

"My dear friend, the letter requires consideration. In the first place, it is clear to me that, in spite of Lord Vargrave's presence at the rectory, his lordship so manages matters that the poor child is unable of herself to bring that matter to a conclusion. And, indeed, to a mind so sensitively delicate and honorable, it is no easy task."

"Shall I write to Lord Vargrave?"

"Let us think of it. In the meanwhile, this Mr. Maltravers——"

"Ah, this Mr. Maltravers!"

"The child shows us more of her heart than she thinks of; and yet I myself am puzzled. If you observe, she has only once or twice spoken of the Colonel Legard, whom she has made acquaintance with; while she treats at length of Mr. Maltravers, and confesses the effect he has produced on her mind. Yet, do you know, I more dread the caution respecting the first, than all the candor that betrays the influence of the last? There is a great difference between first fancy and first love."

"Is there?" said the lady, abstractedly.

"Again, neither of us is acquainted with this singular man—I mean Maltravers; his character, temper, and principles—of all of which Evelyn is too young, too guileless, to judge for herself. One thing, however, in her letter speaks in his favor."

"What is that?"

"He absents himself from her. This, if he has discovered her secret—or if he himself is sensible of too great a charm in her presence

—would be the natural course that an honorable and a strong mind would pursue."

"What!—If he love her?"

"Yes—while he believes her hand is engaged to another."

"True! What shall be done—if Evelyn should love, and love in vain? Ah, it is the misery of a whole existence!"

"Perhaps she had better return to us," said Mr. Aubrey; "and yet, if already it be too late, and her affections are engaged—we should still remain in ignorance respecting the motives and mind of the object of her attachment. And he, too, might not know the true nature of the obstacle connected with Lord Vargrave's claims."

"Shall I, then, go to her? You know how I shrink from strangers—how I fear curiosity, doubts, and questions—how—(and Lady Vargrave's voice faltered)—how unfitted I am for—for——" she stopped short, and a faint blush overspread her cheeks.

The curate understood her, and was moved.

"Dear friend," said he, "will you intrust this charge to myself? You know how Evelyn is endeared to me by certain recollections! Perhaps, better than you, I may be enabled silently to examine if this man be worthy of her, and one who could secure her happiness; —perhaps, better than you, I may ascertain the exact nature of her own feelings towards him;—perhaps, too, better than you, I may effect an understanding with Lord Vargrave."

"You are always my kindest friend," said the lady, with emotion; "how much I already owe you!—what hopes beyond the grave! what——"

"Hush!" interrupted the curate, gently; "your own good heart and pure intentions have worked out your own atonement—may I hope also your own content. Let us return to our Evelyn: poor child! how unlike this despondent letter to her gay light spirits when with us! We acted for the best; yet, perhaps, we did wrong to yield her up to strangers: And this Maltravers!—with her enthusiasm and quick susceptibilities to genius, she was half prepared to imagine him all she depicts him to be. He must have a spell in his works that I have not discovered—for at times it seems to operate even on you."

"Because," said Lady Vargrave, "they remind me of *his* conversation—*his* habits of thought. If like *him* in other things, Evelyn may indeed be happy!"

"And if," said the curate, curiously—"if now that you are free, you were ever to meet with *him* again, and his memory had been as faithful as yours—and he offered the sole atonement in his power, for all that his early error cost you—if such a chance should happen in the vicissitudes of life, you would——"

The curate stopped short; for he was struck by the exceeding paleness of his friend's cheek, and the tremor of her delicate frame.

"If that were to happen," said she in a very low voice; "if we were to meet again, and if he were—as you and Mrs. Leslie seem to think —poor, and, like myself, humbly born—if my fortune could assist him—if my love could still —changed, altered as I am—ah! do not talk of it—I cannot bear the thought of happiness! And yet, if before I die I *could* but see him again!" She clasped her hands fervently as she spoke, and the blush that overspread her face threw over it so much of bloom and freshness, that even Evelyn, at that moment, would scarcely have seemed more young. "Enough," she added, after a little while, as the glow died away. "It is but a foolish hope; all earthly love is buried; and my heart is there!"—she pointed to the heavens, and both were silent.

CHAPTER II.

"Quibus otio vel magnificè, vel molliter vivere copai erat, incerta pro certis malebant." *—SALLUST.

LORD RABY—one of the wealthiest and most splendid noblemen in England—was prouder, perhaps, of his provincial distinctions, than the eminence of his rank or the fashion of his wife. The magnificent châteaux—the immense estates of our English peers—tend to preserve to us, in spite of the freedom, bustle, and commercial grandeur of our people, more of the Norman attributes of aristocracy than can be found in other countries. In his county, the great noble is a petty prince—his house is a court—his possessions and munificence are a boast to every proprietor in his district. They are as fond of talking of *the*

* They who had the means to live at ease, either in splendor or in luxury, preferred the uncertainty of change, to their natural security.

Earl's or *the* Duke's movements and entertainments, as Dangeau was of the gossip of the Tuileries and Versailles.

Lord Raby, while affecting, as lieutenant of the county, to make no political distinctions between squire and squire—hospitable and affable to all—still, by that very absence of exclusiveness, gave a tone to the politics of the whole county; and converted many who had once thought differently on the respective virtues of Whigs and Tories. A great man never loses so much as when he exhibits intolerance, or parades the right of persecution.

"My tenants shall vote exactly as they please," said Lord Raby; and he was never known to have a tenant vote against his wishes! Keeping a vigilant eye on all the interests, and conciliating all the proprietors, in the county, he not only never lost a friend, but he kept together a body of partisans that constantly added to its numbers.

Sir John Merton's colleague, a young Lord Nelthorpe, who could not speak three sentences if you took away his hat; and who constant at Almack's, was not only inaudible but invisible in parliament, had no chance of being re-elected. Lord Nelthorpe's father, the Earl of Mainwaring, was a new peer; and, next to Lord Raby, the richest nobleman in the county. Now, though they were of the same politics, Lord Raby hated Lord Mainwaring. They were too near each other—they clashed—they had the jealousy of rival princes!

Lord Raby was delighted at the notion of getting rid of Lord Nelthorpe—it would be so sensible a blow to the Mainwaring interest. The party had been looking out for a new candidate, and Maltravers had been much talked of. It is true that, when in parliament some years before, the politics of Maltravers had differed from those of Lord Raby and his set. But Maltravers had of late taken no share in politics—had uttered no political opinions—was intimate with the electioneering Mertons—was supposed to be a discontented man—and politicians believe in no discontent that is not political. Whispers were afloat that Maltravers had grown wise, and changed his views: some remarks of his, more theoretical than practical, were quoted in favor of this notion. Parties, too, had much changed since Maltravers had appeared on the busy scene—new questions had arisen, and the old ones had died off.

Lord Raby and his party thought, that if Maltravers could be secured to them, no one would better suit their purpose. Political faction loves converts better even than consistent adherents. A man's rise in life generally dates from a well-timed *rat*. His high reputation—his provincial rank as the representative of the oldest commoner's family in the county—his age, which combined the energy of one period with the experience of another—all united to accord Maltravers a preference over richer men. Lord Raby had been pointedly courteous and flattering to the master of Burleigh; and he now contrived it so, that the brilliant entertainment he was about to give might appear in compliment to a distinguished neighbor, returned to fix his residence on his patrimonial property, while in reality it might serve an electioneering purpose—serve to introduce Maltravers to the county, as if under his lordship's own wing—and minister to political uses that went beyond the mere representation of the county.

Lord Vargrave had, during his stay at Merton Rectory, paid several visits to Knaresdean, and held many private conversations with the marquess: the result of these conversations was a close union of schemes and interests between the two noblemen. Dissatisfied with the political conduct of Government, Lord Raby was also dissatisfied, that, from various party reasons, a nobleman beneath himself in rank, and as he thought in influence, had obtained a preference in a recent vacancy among the Knights of the Garter. And if Vargrave had a talent in the world, it was in discovering the weak points of men whom he sought to gain, and making the vanities of others conduce to his own ambition.

The festivities of Knaresdean gave occasion to Lord Raby to unite at his house the more prominent of those who thought and acted in concert with Lord Vargrave; and in this secret senate, the operations for the following session were to be seriously discussed and gravely determined.

On the day which was to be concluded with the ball at Knaresdean, Lord Vargrave went before the rest of the Merton party, for he was engaged to dine with the Marquess.

On arriving at Knaresdean, Lumley found

Lord Saxingham and some other politicians, who had arrived the preceding day, closeted with Lord Raby; and Vargrave, who shone to yet greater advantage in the diplomacy of party management than in the arena of parliament, brought penetration, energy, and decision to timid and fluctuating councils. Lord Vargrave lingered in the room after the first bell had summoned the other guests to depart.

"My dear lord," said he then, "though no one would be more glad than myself to secure Maltravers to our side, I very much doubt whether you will succeed in doing so. On the one hand, he appears altogether disgusted with politics and parliament; and, on the other hand, I fancy that reports of his change of opinions are, if not wholly unfounded, very unduly colored. Moreover, to do him justice, I think that he is not one to be blinded and flattered into the pale of a party; and your bird will fly away, after you have wasted a bucket-full of salt on his tail."

"Very possibly," said Lord Raby, laughing; "you know him better than I do. But there are many purposes to serve in this matter—purposes too provincial to interest you. In the first place, we shall humble the Nelthorpe interest, merely by showing that we *do* think of a new member: secondly, we shall get up a manifestation of feeling that would be impossible, unless we were provided with a centre of attraction: thirdly, we shall rouse a certain emulation among other county gentlemen; and if Maltravers decline, we shall have many applicants: and fourthly, suppose Maltravers has not changed his opinions, we shall make him suspected by the party he really does belong to, and which would be somewhat formidable if he were to head them. In fact, these are mere county tactics, that you can't be expected to understand."

"I see you are quite right: meanwhile you will at least have an opportunity (though I say it, who should not say it) to present to the county one of the prettiest young ladies that ever graced the halls of Knaresdean."

"Ah, Miss Cameron! I have heard much of her beauty: you are a lucky fellow, Vargrave!—by the by, are we to say anything of the engagement?"

"Why, indeed, my dear lord, it is now so publicly known, that it would be false delicacy to affect concealment."

"Very well; I understand."

"How long I have detained you—a thousand pardons!—I have but just time to dress. In four or five months I must remember to leave you a longer time for your toilet."

"Me—how!"

"Oh, the Duke of * * * * can't live long; and I always observe, that when a handsome man has the Garter, he takes a long time pulling up his stockings."

"Ha, ha! you are so droll, Vargrave."

"Ha, ha!—I must be off.

"The more publicity is given to this arrangement, the more difficult for Evelyn to shy at the leap," muttered Vargrave to himself as he close the door. "Thus do I make all things useful to myself!"

The dinner party were assembled in the great drawing-room, when Maltravers and Cleveland, also invited guests to the banquet, were announced. Lord Raby received the former with marked *empressement;* and the stately marchioness honored him with her most gracious smile. Formal presentations to the rest of the guests were interchanged; and it was not till the circle was fully gone through that Maltravers perceived, seated by himself in a corner, to which he had shrunk on the entrance of Maltravers, a gray-haired, solitary man—it was Lord Saxingham! The last time they had met was in the death-chamber of Florence; and the old man forgot, for the moment, the anticipated dukedom and the dreamed-of premiership!—and his heart flew back to the grave of his only child! They saluted each other—and shook hands in silence. And Vargrave—whose eye was on them—Vargrave, whose arts had made that old man childless, felt not a pang of remorse! Living ever in the future, Vargrave almost seemed to have lost his memory. He knew not what regret was. It is a condition of life with men thoroughly worldly that they never look behind!

The signal was given: in due order the party were marshalled into the great hall—a spacious and lofty chamber, which had received its last alteration from the hand of Inigo Jones; though the massive ceiling with its antique and grotesque masques, betrayed a much earlier date, and contrasted with the Corinthian pilasters that adorned the walls, and supported the music gallery—from which

waved the flags of modern warfare and its mimicries. The Eagle of Napoleon, a token of the services of Lord Raby's brother (a distinguished cavalry officer in command at Waterloo), in juxtaposition with a much gayer and more glittering banner, emblematic of the martial fame of Lord Raby himself, as Colonel of the B——shire volunteers!

The music pealed from the gallery—the plate glittered on the board—the ladies wore diamonds, and the gentlemen, who had them, wore stars. It was a very fine sight, that banquet!—such as became the festive day of a lord-lieutenant, whose ancestors had now defied, and now inter-married, with royalty. But there was very little talk, and no merriment. People at the top of the table drunk wine with those at the bottom; and gentlemen and ladies seated next to each other, whispered languidly in monosyllabic commune. On one side, Maltravers was flanked by a Lady Somebody Something, who was rather deaf, and very much frightened for fear he should talk Greek; on the other side he was relieved by Sir John Merton—very civil, very pompous, and talking, at strictured intervals, about county matters, in a measured intonation, savoring of the House-of-Commons jerk at end of the sentence.

As the dinner advanced to its close, Sir John became a little more diffuse, through his voice sunk into a whisper.

"I fear there will be a split in the cabinet before parliament meets."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; Vargrave and the Premier cannot pull together very long. Clever man, Vargrave! but he has not enough stake in the conntry for a leader!"

"All men have public character to stake: and if that be good, I suppose no stake can be better?"

"Humph!—yes—very true; but still, when a man has land and money, his opinions, in a country like this, very properly carry more weight with them. If Vargrave, for instance, had Lord Raby's property, no man could be more fit for a leader—a prime minister. We might then be sure that he would have no selfish interest to further; he would not play tricks with his party—you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"I am not a party man, as you may remember; indeed, you and I have voted alike on the same questions. Measures, not men—that is my maxim; but still I don't like to see men placed above their proper stations."

"Maltravers—a glass of wine," said Lord Vargrave across the table. "Will you join us, Sir John?"

Sir John bowed.

"Certainly," he resumed, "Vargrave is a pleasant man and a good speaker; but still they say he is far from rich—embarassed, indeed. However, when he marries Miss Cameron it may make a great difference—give him more respectability; do you know what her fortune is—something immense?"

"Yes; I believe so—I don't know."

"My brother says that Vargrave is most amiable. The young lady is very handsome, almost too handsome for a wife—don't you think so? Beauties are all very well in a ball-room; but they are not not calculated for domestic life. I am sure you agree with me. I have heard, indeed, that Miss Cameron is rather learned; but there is so much scandal in a country neighborhood;—people are so ill-natured. I dare say she is not more learned than other young ladies, poor girl! What do you think?"

"Miss Cameron is—is very accomplished, I believe. And so you think the Government cannot stand?"

"I don't say that—very far from it: but I fear there must be a change. However, if the country gentlemen hold together, I do not doubt but what we shall weather the storm. The landed interest, Mr. Maltravers, is the great stay of this country—the sheet-anchor, I may say. I suppose Lord Vargrave, who seems, I must say, to have right notions on this head, will invest Miss Cameron's fortune in land. But though one may buy an estate, one can't buy an old family, Mr. Maltravers! you and I may be thankful for that. By the way, who was Miss Cameron's mother, Lady Vargrave?—somethig low, I fear—nobody knows."

"I am not acquainted with Lady Vargrave: your sister-in-law speaks of her most highly. And the daughter in herself is a sufficient guarantee for the virtues of the mother."

"Yes; and Vargrave on one side, at least, has himself nothing in the way of family to boast of."

The ladies left the hall—the gentlemen reseated themselves. Lord Raby made some remark on politics to Sir John Merton, and the whole round of talkers immediately followed their leader.

"It is a thousand pities, Sir John," said Lord Raby, "that you have not a colleague more worthy of you; Nelthrope never attends a committe does he?"

"I cannot say that he is a very active member; but he is young, and we must make allowances for him," said Sir John, discreetly: for he had no desire to oust his colleague; —it was agreeable enough to be *the* efficient member.

"In these times," said Lord Raby, loftily, "allowances are not to be made for systematic neglect of duty; we shall have a stormy session—the opposition is no longer to be despised—perhaps a dissolution may be nearer at hand than we think for:—as for Neltrope, he cannot come in again."

"That I am quite sure of," said a fat country gentleman of great weight in the county: "he not only was absent on the great Malt question, but he never answered my letter respecting the Canal Company."

"Not answered your letter!" said Lord Raby, lifting up his hands and eyes in amaze and horror. "What conduct!—Ah, Mr. Maltravers, you are the man for us!"

"Hear! hear!" cried the fat squire.

"Hear!' echoed Vargrave; and the approving sound went round the table.

Lord Raby rose—"Gentlemen, fill your glasses;—a health to our distinguished neighbor!"

The company applauded; each in his turn smiled, nodded, and drank to Maltravers, who, though taken by surprise, saw at once the course to pursue. He returned thanks simply and shortly; and; without pointedly noticing the allusion in which Lord Raby had indulged, remarked incidentally, that he had retired, certainly for some years—perhaps for ever—from political life.

Vargrave smiled significantly at Lord Raby, and hastened to lead the conversation into party discussion.—Wrapped in his proud disdain of what he considered the contests of factions for toys and shadows, Maltravers remained silent; and the party soon broke up, and adjourned to the ball room.

CHAPTER III.

"Le plus grand défaut de la pénétration n'est pas de n'aller point jusqu'au but, c'est de le passer." *
—La Rochefaucauld.

Evelyn had looked forward to the Ball at Knaresdean with feelings deeper than those which usually inflame the fancy of a girl, proud of her dress, and confident of her beauty. Whether or not she *loved* Maltravers, in the true acceptation of the word *love*, it is certain that he had acquired a most powerful command over her mind and imagination. She felt the warmest interest in his welfare—the most anxious desire for his esteem—the deepest regret at the thought of their estrangement. At Knaresdean she should meet Maltravers—in crowds, it is true—but still she should meet him; she should see him towering superior above the herd; she should hear him praised; she should mark him, the observed of all. But there was another, and a deeper source of joy within her. A letter had been that morning received from Aubrey, in which he had announced his arrival for the next day. The letter, though affectionate, was short. Evelyn had been some months absent—Lady Vargrave was anxious to make arrangements for her return; but it was to be at her option whether she would accompany the curate home. Now, besides her delight at seeing once more the dear old man, and hearing from his lips that her mother was well and happy, Evelyn hailed in his arrival the means of extricating herself from her position with Lord Vargrave. She would confide in him her increased repugnance to that union—he would confer with Lord Vargrave; and then —and then—did there come once more the thought of Maltravers? No!—I fear it was not Maltravers who called forth that smile and that sigh!—Strange girl, you know not your own mind;—but few of us, at your age, do!

In all the gaiety of hope, in the pride of dress and half-conscious loveliness, Evelyn went with a light step into Caroline's room. Miss Merton had already dismissed her woman, and was seated by her writing-table, leaning her cheek thoughtfully on her hand.

* The greatest defect of penetration is not that of not going just up to the point—it is the passing it.

"Is it time to go?" said she, looking up. "Well—we shall put papa, and the coachman, and the horses, too, in excellent humor. How well you look! Really, Evelyn, you are indeed beautiful!"—and Caroline gazed with honest, but not unenvious admiration at the fairy form so rounded, and yet so delicate; and the face that seemed to blush at its own charms.

"I am sure I can return the flattery," said Evelyn, laughing bashfully.

"Oh! as for me, I am well enough in my way: and hereafter I daresay we may be rival beauties. I hope we shall remain good friends, and rule the world with divided empire. Do you not long for the stir, and excitement, and ambition of London?—for ambition is open to us as to men!"

"No, indeed," replied Evelyn, smiling: "I could be ambitious, indeed; but it would not be for myself, but for——"

"A husband, perhaps; well, you will have ample scope for such sympathy. Lord Vargrave——"

"Lord Vargrave again!" and Evelyn's smile vanished, and she turned away.

"Ah," said Caroline, "I should have made Vargrave an excellent wife—pity he does not think so! As it is, I must set up for myself, and become a *maîtresse femme*.—So you think I look well to-night? I am glad of it—Lord Doltimore is one who will be guided by what other people say."

"You are not serious about Lord Doltimore?"

"Most sadly serious."

"Impossible! you could not speak so if you loved him."

"Loved him! no! but I intend to marry him."

Evelyn was revolted, but still incredulous.

"And you, too, will marry one whom you do not love?—'tis our fate——"

"Never!"

"We shall see."

Evelyn's heart was damped, and her spirits fell.

"Tell me now," said Caroline, pressing on the wrung withers—"do you not think this excitement, partial and provincial though it be—the sense of beauty, the hope of conquest, the consciousness of power—better than the dull monotony of the Devonshire cottage? be honest——"

"No, no, indeed!" answered Evelyn, tearfully and passionately: one hour with my mother, one smile from her lips, were worth it all!"

"And in your visions of marriage, you think then of nothing but roses and doves,—love in a cottage!"

"Love *in a home*, no matter whether a palace or a cottage," returned Evelyn.

"Home!" repeated Caroline, bitterly;—"home—home is the English synonym for the French *ennui*. But I hear papa on the stairs."

A Ball-room—what a scene of commonplace! how hackneyed in novels; how trite in ordinary life; and yet ball-rooms have a character and a sentiment of their own, for all tempers and all ages. Something in the lights—the crowd—the music—conduces to stir up many of the thoughts that belong to fancy and romance. It is a melancholy scene to men after a certain age. It revives many of those lighter and more graceful images connected with the wandering desires of youth; shadows that crossed us, and seemed love, but were not: having much of the grace and charm, but none of the passion and the tragedy, of love. So many of our earliest and gentlest recollections are connected with those chalked floors—and that music painfully gay—and those quiet nooks and corners, where the talk that hovers about the heart and does not touch it has been held. Apart and unsympathizing in that austerer wisdom which comes to us after deep passions have been excited, we see form after form chasing the butterflies that dazzle us no longer among the flowers that have evermore lost their fragrance.

Somehow or other, it is one of the scenes that remind us most forcibly of the loss of youth! We are brought so closely in contact with the young and with the short-lived pleasurcs that once pleased us, and have forfeited all bloom. Happy the man who turns from "the tinkling cymbal," and "the gallery of pictures," and can think of some watchful eye and some kind heart *at home*. But those who have no home—and they are a numerous tribe—never feel lonelier hermits or sadder moralists, than in such a crowd.

Maltravers leaned abstractedly against the wall, and some such reflections perhaps passed within, as the plumes waved and the diamonds

glittered round him. Ever too proud to be vain, the *monstrari digito* had not flattered even in the commencement of his career. And now he heeded not the eyes that sought his look, nor the admiring murmur of lips anxious to be overheard. Affluent, well-born, unmarried, and still in the prime of life,—in the small circles of a province, Ernest Maltravers would in himself have been an object of interest to the diplomacy of mothers and daughters; and the false glare of reputation necessarily deepened curiosity, and widened the range of speculators and observers.

Suddenly, however, a new object of attention excited new interest—new whispers ran through the crowd, and these awakened Maltravers from his revery. He looked up, and beheld all eyes fixed upon one form! His own eyes encountered those of Evelyn Cameron!

It was the first time he had seen this beautiful young person in all the *éclat*, pomp, and circumstance of her station, as the heiress of the opulent Templeton—the first time he had seen her the cynosure of crowds—who, had her features been homely, would have admired the charms of her fortune in her face. And now, as radiant with youth, and the flush of excitement on her soft cheek, she met his eye, he said to himself—"And could I have wished one so new to the world to have united her lot with a man, for whom all that to her is delight has grown wearisome and stale? Could I have been justified in stealing her from the admiration that, at her age, and to her sex, has so sweet a flattery? Or, on the other hand, could I have gone back to her years, and sympathized with feelings that time has taught me to despise?—Better as it is."

Influenced by these thoughts, the greeting of Maltravers disappointed and saddened Evelyn, she knew not why; it was constrained and grave.

"Does not Miss Cameron look well?" whispered Mrs. Merton, on whose arm the heiress leant. "You observe what a sensation she creates?"

Evelyn overheard, and blushed as she stole a glance at Maltravers. There was something mournful in the admiration which spoke in his deep, earnest eyes.

"Everywhere," said he, calmly, and in the same tone, "Everywhere Miss Cameron appears, she must outshine all others." He turned to Evelyn, and said with a smile, "You must learn to enure yourself to admiration—a year or two hence, and you will not blush at your own gifts!"

"And you, too, contribute to spoil me!—fie!"

"Are you so easily spoiled? If I meet you hereafter, you will think my compliments cold to the common language of others."

"You do not know me—perhaps you never will."

"I am contented with the fair pages I have already read."

"Where is Lady Raby?" asked Mrs. Merton. "Oh, I see: Evelyn, my love, we must present ourselves to our hostess.

The ladies moved on—and when Maltravers next caught a glance of Evelyn, she was with Lady Raby, and Lord Vargrave also was by her side.

The whispers round him had grown louder.

"Very lovely indeed!—so young, too!—and she is really going to be married to Lord Vargrave: so much older than she is—quite a sacrifice!"

"Scarcely so. He is so agreeable and still handsome. But are you sure that the thing is settled?"

"Oh, yes. Lord Raby himself told me so. It will take place very soon."

"But do you know who her mother was?—I cannot make out."

"Nothing particular. You know the late Lord Vargrave was a man of low birth. I believe she was a widow of his own rank—she lives quite in seclusion."

"How d' ye do, Mr. Maltravers? So glad to see you," said the quick shrill voice of Mrs. Hare. "Beautiful ball—nobody does things like Lord Raby—don't you dance?"

"No, madam."

"Oh, you young gentleman are so *fine* nowadays." (Mrs. Hare, laying stress on the word *young*, thought she had paid a very elegant compliment, and ran on with increased complacency.)

"You are going to let Burleigh, I hear, to Lord Doltimore—is is true?—No!—really now, what stories people do tell. Elegant man, Lord Doltimore! Is it true, that Miss Caroline is going to marry his lordship?—Great match!—No scandal, I hope; you'll excuse

me!—Two wedding on the *tapis*—quite stirring for our stupid county. Lady Vargrave and Lady Doltimore, two new peeresses. Which do you think is the handsomer?—Miss Merton is the taller, but there is something fierce in her eyes. Don't you think so?—By the by, I wish you joy—you'll excuse *me*."

"Wish me joy, madam!"

"Oh, you are so close. Mr. Hare says he shall support you. You will have all the ladies with you. Well, I declare, Lord Vargrave is going to dance. How old is he, do you think?"

Maltravers uttered an audible *pshaw*, and moved away; but his penance was not over. Lord Vargrave, much as he disliked dancing, still thought it wise to ask the fair hand of Evelyn; and Evelyn, also, could not refuse.

And now, as the crowd gathered round the red ropes, Maltravers had to undergo new exclamations at Evelyn's beauty and Vargrave's luck. Impatiently he turned from the spot, with that gnawing sickness of the heart which none but the jealous know. He longed to depart, yet dreaded to do so. It was the last time he should see Evelyn, perhaps for years—the last time he should see her as Miss Cameron!

He passed into another room, deserted by all save four old gentlemen—Cleveland one of them—immersed in whist; and threw himself upon an ottoman, placed in a recess by the oriel window. There, half-concealed by the draperies, he communed and reasoned with himself. His heart was sad within him; he never felt before *how* deeply and *how* passionately he loved Evelyn—how firmly that love had fastened upon the very core of his heart! Strange, indeed, it was in a girl so young—of whom he had seen but little—and that little in positions of such quiet and ordinary interest—to excite a passion so intense in a man who had gone through strong emotions and stern trials! But all love is unaccountable. The solitude in which Maltravers had lived—the absence of all other excitement—perhaps had contributed largely to fan the flame. And his affections had so long slept; and after long sleep the passions wake with such giant strength! He felt now too well that the last rose of life had bloomed for him—it was blighted in its birth, but it could never be replaced. Henceforth, indeed, he should be alone—the hopes of home were gone for ever; and the other occupations of mind and soul—literature, pleasure, ambition—were already forsworn at the very age in which by most men they are most indulged! O Youth! begin not thy career too soon, and let one passion succeed in its due order to another; so that every season of life may have its appropriate pursuit and charm!

The hours waned—still Maltravers stirred not; nor were his meditations disturbed, except by occasional ejaculations from the four old gentlemen, as between each deal they moralized over the caprices of the cards.

At length, close beside him he heard that voice, the lightest sound of which could send the blood rushing through his veins; and from his retreat he saw Caroline and Evelyn, seated close by.

"I beg pardon," said the former in a low voice—"I beg pardon, Evelyn, for calling you away—but I longed to tell you. The die is cast.—Lord Doltimore has proposed, and I have accepted him!—Alas, alas! I half wish I could retract!"

"Dearest Caroline!" said the silver voice of Evelyn; "for Heaven's sake, did not thus wantonly resolve on your own unhappiness! You wrong yourself, Caroline!—you do, indeed!—You are not the vain, ambitious character you affect to be! Ah! what is it you require—wealth?—are you not my friend?—am I not rich enough for both?—rank?—what can it give you to compensate for the misery of an union without love?—Pray forgive me for speaking thus; do not think me presumptuous, or romantic—but indeed, indeed, I know from my own heart what yours must undergo!"

Caroline pressed her friend's hand with emotion.

"You are a bad comforter, Evelyn;—my mother—my father, will preach a very different doctrine. I am foolish, indeed, to be so sad in obtaining the very object I have sought! Poor Doltimore!—he little knows the nature, the feelings of her whom he thinks he has made the happiest of her sex—he little knows"—Caroline paused, turned pale as death, and then went rapidly on—"But you, Evelyn, *you* will meet the same fate, we shall bear it together."

"No!—no!—do not think so!—Where I give my hand, there shall I give my heart."

At this time Maltravers half rose, and sighed audibly.

"Hush!" said Caroline, in alarm. At the same moment, the whist-table broke up, and Cleveland approached Maltravers.

"I am at your service," said he; "I know you will not stay the supper. You will find me in the next room; I am just going to speak to Lord Saxingham." The gallant old gentleman then paid a compliment to the young ladies, and walked away.

"So, you too are a deserter from the ball-room!" said Miss Merton to Maltravers as she rose.

"I am not very well; but do not let me frighten you away."

"Oh, no! I hear the music—it is the last quadrille before supper—and here is my fortunate partner looking for me."

"I have been everywhere in search of you," said Lord Doltimore, in an accent of tender reproach; "come, we are almost too late now."

Caroline put her arm into Lord Doltimore's, who hurried her into the ball-room.

Miss Cameron looked irresolute whether or not to follow, when Maltravers seated himself beside her;—and the paleness of his brow, and something that bespoke pain in the compressed lip—went at once to her heart. In her child-like tenderness, she would have given worlds for the sister's privilege of sympathy and soothing. The room was now deserted—they were alone.

The words that he had overheard from Evelyn's lips—"Where I shall give my hand, there shall I give my heart"—Maltravers interpreted, but in one sense—'she loved her betrothed!'—and strange as it may seem, at that thought which put the last seal upon his fate, selfish anguish was less felt than deep compassion. So young—so courted—so tempted as she must be—and with such a protector!—the cold, the unsympathizing, the heartless Vargrave! She, too whose feelings so warm, ever trembled on her lip and eye—Oh! when she awoke from her dream, and knew whom she had loved, what might be her destiny—what her danger!

"Miss Cameron," said Maltravers, "let me for one moment detain you; I will not trespass long. May I once, and for the last time assume the austere rights of friendship! I have seen much of life, Miss Cameron, and my experience has been purchased dearly: and, harsh and hermit-like as I may have grown, I have not out lived such feeling as you are well formed to excite. "Nay,"—(and Maltravers smiled sadly)—"I am not about to compliment or flatter.—I speak not to you as the young to the young; the difference of our years, that takes away sweetness from flattery, leaves still sincerity to friendship. You have inspired me with a deep interest;—deeper than I thought that living beauty could ever rouse in me again! It may be, that something in the tone of your voice, your manner, a nameless grace that I cannot define—reminds me of one whom I knew in youth;—one who had not your advantages of education, wealth, birth; but to whom Nature was more kind than Fortune."

He paused a moment; and, without looking towards Evelyn, thus renewed:—

"You are entering life under brilliant auspices.—Ah! let me hope that the noonday will keep the promise of the dawn! You are susceptible—imaginative; do not demand too much, or dream too fondly. When you are wedded, do not imagine that wedded life is exempt from its trials and its cares: if you know yourself beloved—and beloved you must be—do not ask from the busy and anxious spirit of man all which Romance promises and Life but rarely yields. And oh!" continued Maltravers, with an absorbing and earnest passion that poured forth its language with almost breathless rapidity;—"if ever your heart rebels—if ever it be dissatisfied—fly the false sentiment as a sin! Thrown, as from your rank you must be, on a world of a thousand perils, with no guide so constant, and so safe, as your own innocence—make not that world too dear a friend. Were it possible that your own home ever could be lonely or unhappy, reflect that to woman the unhappiest home is happier than all excitement abroad. You will have a thousand suitors, hereafter: believe that the asp lurks under the flatterer's tongue, and resolve, come what may, to be contented with your lot. How many have I known, lovely and pure as you, who have suffered the very affections—the very beauty of their nature—to destroy them! Listen to me as a warner—as a brother—as a pilot who has passed the seas

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"Miss Cameron," said Maltravers, "let me for one moment detain you; I will not trespass long. May I once, and for the last time assume the austere rights of friendship! I have seen much of life, Miss Cameron, and my experience has been purchased dearly: and, harsh and hermit-like as I may have grown, I have not out lived such feeling as you are well formed to excite. "Nay,"—(and Maltravers smiled sadly)—"I am not about to compliment or flatter.—I speak not to you as the young to the young; the difference of our years, that takes away sweetness from flattery, leaves still sincerity to friendship. You have inspired me with a deep interest;—deeper than I thought that living beauty could ever rouse in me again! It may be, that something in the tone of your voice, your manner, a nameless grace that I cannot define—reminds me of one whom I knew in youth;—one who had not your advantages of education, wealth, birth; but to whom Nature was more kind than Fortune."

He paused a moment; and, without looking towards Evelyn, thus renewed:—

"You are entering life under brilliant auspices.—Ah! let me hope that the noonday will keep the promise of the dawn! You are susceptible—imaginative; do not demand too much, or dream too fondly. When you are wedded, do not imagine that wedded life is exempt from its trials and its cares: if you know yourself beloved—and beloved you must be—do not ask from the busy and anxious spirit of man all which Romance promises and Life but rarely yields. And oh!" continued Maltravers, with an absorbing and earnest passion that poured forth its language with almost breathless rapidity;—"if ever your heart rebels—if ever it be dissatisfied—fly the false sentiment as a sin! Thrown, as from your rank you must be, on a world of a thousand perils, with no guide so constant, and so safe, as your own innocence—make not that world too dear a friend. Were it possible that your own home ever could be lonely or unhappy, reflect that to woman the unhappiest home is happier than all excitement abroad. You will have a thousand suitors, hereafter: believe that the asp lurks under the flatterer's tongue, and resolve, come what may, to be contented with your lot. How many have I known, lovely and pure as you, who have suffered the very affections—the very beauty of their nature—to destroy them! Listen to me as a warner—as a brother—as a pilot who has passed the seas

on which your vessel is about to launch. And ever—ever let me know, in whatever lands your name may reach me, that one who has brought back to me all my faith in human excellence, while the idol of our sex is the glory of her own. Forgive me this strange impertinence; my heart is full, and has overflowed. And now, Miss Cameron—Evelyn Cameron—this is my last offence, and my last farewell!"

He held out his hand, and involuntarily, unknowingly, she clasped it as if to detain him till she could summon words to reply. Suddenly he heard Lord Vargrave's voice behind—the spell was broken—the next moment Evelyn was alone, and the throng swept into the room towards the banquet, and laughter and gay voices were heard—and Lord Vargrave was again by Evelyn's side!

CHAPTER IV.

. . . . "To you
This journey is devoted."
—*Lover's Progress*, Act iv., Scene 1.

As Cleveland and Maltravers returned homeward, the latter abruptly checked the cheerful garrulity of his friend "I have a favor—a great favor to ask of you."

"And what is that?"

"Let us leave Burleigh to-morrow; I care not at what hour; we need go but two or three stages if you are fatigued."

"Most hospitable host! and why?"

"It is torture, it is agony to me, to breathe the air of Burleigh," cried Maltravers, wildly. "Can you not guess my secret? Have I then concealed it so well? I love, I adore Evelyn Cameron, and she is betrothed to—she loves—another!"

Mr. Cleveland was breathless with amaze; Maltravers had indeed so well concealed his secret; and now his emotion was so impetuous, that it startled and alarmed the old man, who had never himself experienced a passion, though he had indulged a sentiment. He sought to console and soothe; but after the first burst of agony, Maltravers recovered himself, and said gently—

"Let us never return to this subject again: it is right that I should conquer this madness, and conquer it I will! Now you know my weakness, you will indulge it. My cure cannot commence, until I can no longer see from my casements the very roof that shelters the affianced bride of another."

"Certainly, then, we will set off to-morrow: my poor friend! is it indeed——"

"Ah, cease," interrupted the proud man; "no compassion I implore: give me but time and silence—they are the only remedies."

Before noon the next day, Burleigh was once more deserted by its lord. As the carriage drove through the village, Mrs. Elton saw it from her open window. But her patron, too absorbed at that hour, even for benevolence, forgot her existence: and yet so complicated are the webs of fate, that in the breast of that lowly stranger was locked a secret of the most vital moment to Maltravers.

"Where is he going? where is the squire going?" asked Mrs. Elton, anxiously.

"Dear heart!" said the cottager, "they do say he be going for a short time to foren parts. But he will be back at Christmas."

"And at Christmas I may be gone hence for ever," muttered the invalid. "But what will that matter to him—to any one?"

At the first stage Maltravers and his friend were detained a short time for the want of horses. Lord Raby's house had been filled with guests on the preceeding night, and the stables of this little inn, dignified with the sign of the Raby Arms, and about two miles distant from the great man's place, had been exhausted by numerous claimants returning homeward from Knaresdean. It was a quiet, solitary post-house, and patience, till some jaded horses should return, was the only remedy; the host, assuring the travellers that he expected forur horses every moment, invited them within. The morning was cold, and the fire not unacceptable to Mr. Cleveland; so they went into the little parlor. Here they found an elderly gentleman of very prepossessing appearance, who was waiting for the same object. He moved courteously from the fireplace as the travellers entered and pushed the B——shire Chronicle towards Cleveland: Cleveland bowed urbanely. "A cold day, sir; the autumn begins to show itself."

"It is true, sir," answered the old gentleman; "and I feel the cold the more, having

just quitted the genial atmosphere of the south."

"Of Italy?"

"No, of England only. I see by this paper (I am not much of a politician) that there is a chance of a dissolution of parliament, and that Mr. Maltravers is likely to come forward for this county; are you acquainted with him, sir?"

"A little," said Cleveland, smiling.

"He is a man I am much interested in," said the old gentleman; "and I hope soon to be honored with his acquaintance."

"Indeed! and you are going into his neighborhood?" asked Cleveland, looking more attentively at the stranger, and much pleased with a certain simple candor in his countenance and manner.

"Yes, to Merton Rectory."

Maltravers, who had been hitherto stationed by the window, turned round.

"To Merton Rectory?" repeated Cleveland. "You are acquainted with Mr. Merton, then?"

"Not yet; but I know some of his family. However my visit is rather to a young lady who is staying at the rectory—Miss Cameron."

Maltravers sighed heavily; and the old gentleman looked at him curiously. "Perhaps, sir, if you know that neighborhood, you may have seen ——"

"Miss Cameron! Certainly, it is an honor not easily forgotten."

The old gentleman looked pleased.

"The dear child," said he, with a burst of honest affection—and he passed his hand over his eyes. Maltravers drew near to him.

"You know Miss Cameron; you are to be envied, sir," said he.

"I have known her since she was a child—Lady Vargrave is my dearest friend."

"Lady Vargrave must be worthy of such a daughter. Only under the light of a sweet disposition and pure heart could that beautiful nature have been trained and reared."

Maltravers spoke with enthusiasm; and, as if fearful to trust himself more, left the room.

"That gentleman speaks not more warmly than justly," said the old man with some surprise. He has a countenance which, if physiognomy be a true science, declares his praise to be no common compliment—may I inquire his name?"

"Maltravers," replied Cleveland, a little vain of the effect his ex-pupil's name was to produce.

The curate—for it was he—started and changed countenance.

"Maltravers: but he is not about to leave the county?"

"Yes, for a few months."

Here the host entered. Four horses, that had been only fourteen miles, had just re-entered the yard. If Mr. Maltravers could spare two to that gentleman, who had, indeed, pre-engaged them?

"Certainly," said Cleveland; "but be quick."

"And is Lord Vargrave still at Mr. Merton's?" asked the curate musingly.

"Oh, yes—I believe so. Miss Cameron is to be married to him very shortly—is it not so?"

"I cannot say," returned Aubrey, rather bewildered. "You know Lord Vargrave, sir?"

"Extremely well!"

"And you think him worthy of Miss Cameron?"

"That is a question for her to answer. But I see the horses are put to. Good day, sir! Will you tell your fair young friend that you have met an old gentleman who wishes her all happiness; and if she ask you his name, say Cleveland?"

So saying, Mr. Cleveland bowed, and re-entered the carriage. But Maltravers was yet missing. In fact, he returned to the house by the back way, and went once more into the little parlor. It was something to see again one who would so soon see Evelyn!

"If I mistake not," said Maltravers, "you are that Mr. Aubrey on whose virtues I have often heard Miss Cameron delight to linger? Will you believe my regret that our acquaintance is now so brief?"

As Maltravers spoke thus simply, there was in his countenance—his voice—a melancholy sweetness, which greatly conciliated the good curate. And as Aubrey gazed upon his noble features and lofty mien, he no longer wondered at the fascination he had appeared to exercise over the young Evelyn.

"And may I not hope, Mr. Maltravers," said he, "that before long our acquaintance may be renewed? Could not Miss Cameron," he added, with a smile and a penetrating look, tempt you into Devonshire?"

Maltravers shook his head, and, muttering something not very audible, quitted the room. The curate heard the whirl of the wheels, and the host entered to inform him that his own carriage was now ready.

"There is something in this," thought Aubrey, "which I do not commend. His manner.—his trembling voice—bespoke emotions he struggled to conceal. Can Lord Vargrave have gained his point? Is Evelyn, indeed, no longer free?"

CHAPTER V.

"Certes, c'est un grand cas, Icas,
Que toujours tracas ou fracas
Vous faites d'une ou d'autre sort;
C'est le diable qui vous emporte!"
—VOITURE.*

LORD VARGRAVE had passed the night of the ball and the following morning at Knaresdean. It was necessary to bring the councils of the scheming conclave to a full and definite conclusion; and this was at last effected. Their strength numbered—friends and foes alike canvassed and considered—and due account taken of the waverers to be won over, it really did seem, even to the least sanguine, that the Saxingham, or Vargrave party, was one that might well aspire either to dictate to, or to break up, a government. Nothing now was left to consider but the favorable hour for action. In high spirits, Lord Vargrave returned about the middle of the day to the rectory.

"So," thought he, as he reclined in his carriage—"so, in politics, the prospect clears as the sun breaks out. The party I have espoused is one that must be the most durable, for it possesses the greatest property and the most stubborn prejudice—what elements for Party! All that I now require is a sufficient fortune to back my ambition. Nothing can clog my way but these cursed debts—this disreputable want of gold. And yet Evelyn alarms me! Were I younger—or had I not made my position too soon—I would marry her by fraud or by force; run off with her to Gretna, and make Vulcan minister to Plutus. But this would never do at my years, and with my reputation. A pretty story for the newspapers!—d——n them! Well, nothing venture, nothing have; I will brave the hazard! Meanwhile, Doltimore is mine, Caroline will rule him, and I rule her. His vote and his boroughs are something—his money will be more immediately useful. I must do him the honor to borrow a few thousands—Caroline must manage that for me. The fool is miserly, though a spendthrift; and looked black when I delicately hinted the other day, that I wanted a friend—*id est*, a loan! Money and friendship same thing—distinction without a difference!" Thus cogitating, Vargrave whiled away the minutes till his carriage stopped at Mr. Merton's door.

As he entered the hall he met Caroline, who had just quitted her own room.

"How lucky I am that you have on your bonnet! I long for a walk with you round the lawn."

"And I, too, am glad to see you, Lord Vargrave," said Caroline, putting her arm in his.

"Accept my best congratulations, my own sweet friend," said Vargrave when they were in the grounds. "You have no idea how happy Doltimore is. He came to Knaresdean yesterday to communicate the news, and his neckcloth was primmer than ever.—*C'est un bon enfant.*"

"Ah, how can you talk thus? Do you feel no pain at the thought that—that I am another's?"

"Your heart will be ever mine—and that is the true fidelity: what else, too, could be done? As for Lord Doltimore, we will go shares in him. Come, cheer thee, *m'amie*—I rattle on thus to keep up your spirits. Do not fancy I am happy!"

Caroline let fall a few tears; but, beneath the influence of Vargrave's sophistries and flatteries, she gradually recovered her usual hard and worldly tone of mind.

"And where is Evelyn?" asked Vargrave. "Do you know the little witch seemed to me half mad the night of the ball: her head was turned: and when she sate next me at supper, she not only answered every question I put to her *à tort et à travers*, but I fancied every moment she was going to burst out crying. Can you tell me what was the matter with her?"

* Certes, it is the fact, Icas, that you are always engaged in tricks or scrapes of some sort or another—it must be the devil that bewitches you.

"She was grieved to hear that I was to be married to the man I do not love. Ah, Vargrave! she has more heart than you have."

"But she never fancies that you love me?" asked Lumley, in alarm. "You women are so confoundedly confidential!"

"No—she does not suspect our secret."

"Then I scarcely think your approaching marriage was a sufficient cause for so much distraction."

"Perhaps she may have overheard some of the impertinent whispers about her mother,—'Who was Lady Vargrave?'—and, 'What Cameron was Lady Vargrave's first husband?' *I* overheard a hundred such vulgar questions, and provincial people whisper so loud."

"Ah, that is a very probable solution of the mystery. And for my part, I am almost as much puzzled as any one else can be to know who Lady Vargrave was!"

"Did not your uncle tell you?"

"He told me that she was of no very elevated birth and station, nothing more; and she herself, with her quiet say-nothing manner, slips through all my careless qnestionings like an eel. She is still a beautiful creature, more regularly handsome than even Evelyn; and old Templeton had a very sweet tooth at the back of his head, though he never opened his mouth wide enough to show it."

"She must ever at least have been blameless, to judge by an air which, even now, is more like that of a child than a matron."

"Yes; she has not much of the widow about her, poor soul! But her education, except in music, has not been very carefully attended to; and she knows about as much of the world as the Bishop of Autun (better known as Prince Talleyrand) knows of the Bible. If she were not so simple, she would be silly; but silliness is never simple—always cunning; however, there is some cunning in her keeping her past Cameronian Chronicles so close. Perhaps I may know more about her in a short time, for I intend going to C*****, where my uncle once lived, in order to see if I can revive, under the rose,—since peers are only contraband electioneerers—his old parliamentary influence in that city: and they may tell me more there than I now know."

"Did the late lord marry at C*****?"

"No—in Devonshire. I do not even know if Mrs. Cameron ever was at C*****."

"You must be curious to know who the father of your intended wife was?"

"Her father! No; I have no curiosity in that quarter. And, to tell you the truth, I am much too busy about the Present to be raking into that heap of rubbish we call the Past. I fancy that both your good grandmother, and that comely old curate of Brook Green, know everything about Lady Vargrave; and, as they esteem her so much, I take it for granted she is *sans tache*."

"How could I be so stupid!—*à propos* of the curate, I forgot to tell you that he is here. He arrived about two hours ago, and has been closeted with Evelyn ever since!"

"The deuce! What brought the old man hither?"

"That I know not. Papa received a letter from him yesterday morning, to say that he would be here to-day. Perhaps Lady Vargrave thinks it time for Evelyn to return home."

"What am I to do?" said Vargrave, anxiously. "Dare I yet venture to propose?"

"I am sure it will yet be in vain, Vargrave. You must prepare for disappointment."

"And ruin," muttered Vargrave, gloomily. "Hark you, Caroline,—she may refuse me if she pleases. But I am not a man to be baffled. Have her I will, by one means or another;—revenge urges me to it almost as much as ambition. That girl's thread of life has been the dark line in my woof—she has robbed me of fortune—she now thwarts me in my career—she humbles me in my vanity. But like a hound that has tasted blood, I will run her down, whatever winding she takes!"

"Vargrave, you terrify me! Reflect; we do not live in an age when violence——"

"Tush!" interrupted Lumley, with one of those dark looks which at times, though very rarely, swept away all its customary character from that smooth, shrewd countenance. "Tush!—we live in an age as favorable to intellect and to energy as ever was painted in romance. I have that faith in fortune and myself that I tell you, with a prophet's voice, that Evelyn shall fulfil the wish of my dying uncle. But the bell summons us back."

On returning to the house, Lord Vargrave's valet gave him a letter, which had arrived that morning. It was from Mr. Gustavus Douce, and ran thus:—

"Fleet Street, —— 20th, 18—.

"My Lord,

"It is with the greatest regret that I apprise you, for Self & Co., that we shall not be able in the present state of the Money Market to renew your bill for 10,000*l.*, due the 28th instant. Respectfully calling your Lordship's attention to same,

"I have the honor to be,

"For Self & Co., my Lord,

"Your Lordship's most obedient

"And most obliged and humble servant,

"Gustavus Douce.

"To the Right Hon the Lord Vargrave, etc. etc."

The letter sharpened Lord Vargrave's anxiety and resolve; nay, it seemed almost to sharpen his sharp features as he muttered sundry denunciations on Messrs. Douce and Co., while arranging his neckcloth at the glass.

CHAPTER VI.

Sol. "Why, please your honorable lordship, we were talking here and there—this and that."—*The Stranger.*

Aubrey had been closeted with Evelyn the whole morning; and, simultaneous with his arrival, came to her the news of the departure of Maltravers: it was an intelligence that greatly agitated and unnerved her: and, coupling that event with his solemn words on the previous night, Evelyn asked herself, in wonder, what sentiments she could have inspired in Maltravers? Could he love her?—her, so young—so inferior—so uninformed!—Impossible! Alas!—alas!—for Maltravers! his genius—his gifts—his towering qualities—all that won the admiration, almost the awe, of Evelyn—placed him at a distance from her heart! When she asked herself if he loved her, she did not ask, even in that hour, if she loved him. But even the question she did ask, her judgment answered erringly in the negative—Why should he love, and yet fly her? She understood not his high-wrought scruples—his self-deluding belief. Aubrey was more puzzled than enlightened by his conversation with his pupil; only one thing seemed certain—her delight to return to the cottage and her mother.

Evelyn could not sufficiently recover her composure to mix with the party below; and Aubrey, at the sound of the second dinner-bell, left her to solitude, and bore her excuses to Mrs. Merton.

"Dear me!" said that worthy lady; "I am so sorry—I thought Miss Cameron looked fatigued at breakfast; and there was something hysterical in her spirits; and I suppose the surprise of your arrival has upset her. Caroline, my dear, you had better go and see what she would like to have taken up to her room—a little soup, and the wing of a chicken."

"My dear," said Mr. Merton, rather pompously, "I think it would be but a proper respect to Miss Cameron, if you yourself accompanied Caroline."

"I assure you," said the curate, alarmed at the avalanche of politeness that threatened poor Evelyn, "I assure you that Miss Cameron would prefer being left alone at present; as you say, Mrs. Merton, her spirits are rather agitated."

But Mrs. Merton, with a sliding bow, had already quitted the room, and Caroline with her.

"Come back, Sophy!—Cecilia, come back!" said Mr. Merton, settling his *jabot*.

"Oh, dear Evy!—poor dear Evy!—Evy is ill!" said Sophy; "I may go to Evy! I must go, papa!"

"No, my dear, you are too noisy; these children are quite spoiled, Mr. Aubrey."

The old man looked at them benevolently, and drew them to his knee; and, while Cissy stroked his long white hair, and Sophy ran on about dear Evy's prettiness and goodness, Lord Vargrave sauntered into the room.

On seeing the curate, his frank face lighted up the surprise and pleasure; he hastened to him, seized him by both hands, expressed the most heart-felt delight at seeing him, inquired tenderly after Lady Vargrave, and, not till he was out of breath, and Mrs. Merton and Caroline returning apprised him of Miss Cameron's indisposition, did his rapture vanish; and, as a moment before he was all joy, so now he was all sorrow.

The dinner passed off dully enough; the children, re-admitted to dessert, made a little relief to all parties; and, when they and the two ladies went, Aubrey himself quickly rose to join Evelyn.

"Are you going to Miss Cameron?" said Lord Vargrave: "pray say how unhappy I feel at her illness. I think these grapes—they are very fine—could not hurt her. May I ask you to present them with my best—best and most

anxious regards? I shall be so uneasy till you return. Now, Merton (as the door closed on the curate), let's have another bottle of this famous claret!—Droll old fellow, that—quite a character!"

"He is a great favorite with Lady Vargrave and Miss Cameron, I believe," said Mr. Merton. "A mere village priest, I suppose; no talent, no energy—or he could not be a curate at that age."

"Very true;—a shrewd remark. The church is as good a profession as any other for getting on, if a man has anything in him. I shall live to see *you* a bishop!"

Mr. Merton shook his head.

"Yes, I shall; though you have hitherto disdained to exhibit any one of the three orthodox qualifications for a mitre."

"And what are they, my lord?"

"Editing a Greek play—writing a political pamphlet—and apostatizing at the proper moment."

"Ha! ha! your lordship is severe on us!"

"Not I—I often wish I had been brought up to the church—famous profession, properly understood. By Jupiter, I should have been a capital bishop!"

In his capacity of parson, Mr. Merton tried to look grave;—in his capacity of a gentleman-like, liberal fellow, he gave up the attempt, and laughed pleasantly at the joke of the rising man.

CHAPTER VII.

"Will nothing please you?
What do you think of the Court?"
—*The Plain Dealer.*

On one subject, Aubrey found no difficulty in ascertaining Evelyn's wishes and condition of mind. The experiment of her visit, so far as Vargrave's hopes were concerned, had utterly failed;—she could not contemplate the prospect of his alliance, and she poured out to the curate, frankly and fully, all her desire to effect a release from her engagement. As it was now settled that she should return with Aubrey to Brook Green, it was indeed necessary to come to the long delayed understanding with her betrothed. Yet this was difficult, for he had so little pressed—so distantly alluded to—their engagement, that it was like a forwardness, an indelicacy in Evelyn, to forestall the longed-for, yet dreaded explanation. This, however, Aubrey took upon himself; and at this promise Evelyn felt as the slave may feel when the chain is stricken off.

At breakfast, Mr. Aubrey communicated to the Mertons Evelyn's intention to return with him to Brook Green, on the following day. Lord Vargrave started—bit his lip—but said nothing.

Not so silent was Mr. Merton:—

"Return with you! my dear Mr. Aubrey—just consider—it is impossible—you see Miss Cameron's rank of life, her position—so very strange—no servants of her own here, but her woman—no carriage even! You would not have her travel in a post-chaise—such a long journey! Lord Vargrave, you can never consent to that, I am sure?"

"Were it only as Miss Cameron's *guardian*," said Lord Vargrave, pointedly, "I should certainly object to such a mode of performing such a journey. Perhaps Mr. Aubrey means to perfect he project by taking two outside places on the top of the coach?"

"Pardon me," said the curate, mildly, "but I am not so ignorant of what is due to Miss Cameron as you suppose. Lady Vargrave's carriage, which brought me hither, will be no unsuitable vehicle for Lady Vargrave's daughter; and Miss Cameron is not, I trust, quite so spoilt by all your friendly attentions, as to be unable to perform a journey of two days, with no other protector than myself."

"I forgot Lady Vargrave's carriage, or rather I was not aware that you had used it, my dear sir," said Mr. Merton. "But you must not blame us, if we are sorry to lose Miss Cameron so suddenly: I was in hopes that *you* too would stay at least a week with us."

The curate bowed at the rector's condescending politeness; and just as he was about to answer, Mrs. Merton put in—

"And you see I had set my heart on her being Caroline's bridesmaid."

Caroline turned pale, and glanced at Vargrave, who appeared solely absorbed in breaking toast into his tea—a delicacy he had never before been known to favor.

There was an awkward pause: the servant opportunely entered with a small parcel of

books, a note to Mr. Merton, and that blessed of all blessed things in the country, the letter-bag.

"What is this?" said the rector, opening his note; while Mrs. Merton unlocked the bag and dispensed the contents;—"Left Burleigh for some months—a day or two sooner than he had expected—excuse French leave-taking—return Mrs. Merton's books—much obliged—gamekeeper has orders to place the Burleigh preserves at my disposal. So we have lost our neighbor!"

"Did you not know Mr. Maltravers was gone?" said Caroline. "I heard so from Jenkins last night; he accompanies Mr. Cleveland to Paris."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Merton, opening her eyes. "What could take him to Paris?"

"Pleasure, I suppose," answered Caroline. "I'm sure I should rather have wondered what could detain him at Burleigh."

Vargrave was all this while breaking open seals, and running his eyes over sundry scrawls with the practiced rapidity of the man of business; he came to the last letter—his countenance brightened—

"Royal invitation, or rather command, to Windsor," he cried. "I am afraid I, too, must leave you, this very day."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Merton; "is that from the king? Do let me see!"

"Not exactly from the king; the same thing, though:" and Lord Vargrave, carelessly pushing the gracious communication towards the impatient hand and loyal gaze of Mrs. Merton, carefully put the other letters in his pocket, and walked musingly to the window.

Aubrey seized the opportunity to approach him. "My lord, can I speak with you a few moments?"

"Me! certainly: will you come to my dressing-room?"

CHAPTER VIII.

. . . . "There was never
Poor gentleman had such a sudden fortune."
—BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER:
The Captain, Act v., Sc. 5.

"MY LORD," said the curate, as Vargrave, leaning back in his chair, appeared to examine the shape of his boots; while, in reality, his 'sidelong looks,' not 'of love,' were fixed upon his companion—"I need scarcely refer to the wish of the late lord, your uncle, relative to Miss Cameron and yourself; nor need I, to one of a generous spirit, add, that an engagement could be only so far binding as both the parties, whose happiness it concerned, should be willing in proper time and season to fulfil it."

"Sir!" said Vargrave, impatiently waving his hand; and, in his irritable surmise of what was to come, losing his habitual self-control—"I know not what all this has to do with you; surely you trespass upon ground sacred to Miss Cameron and myself. Whatever you have to say, let me beg you to come at once to the point."

"My lord, I will obey you. Miss Cameron—and, I may add, with Lady Vargrave's consent—deputes me to say that, although she feels compelled to decline the honor of your lordship's alliance, yet, if in any arrangement of the fortune bequeathed to her she could testify to you, my lord, her respect and friendship, it would afford her the most sincere gratification."

Lord Vargrave started.

"Sir," said he, "I know not if I am to thank you for this information—the announcement of which so strangely coincides with your arrival. But allow me to say, that there needs no ambassador between Miss Cameron and myself. It is due, sir, to my station, to my relationship, to my character of guardian, to my long and faithful affection, to all considerations which men of the world understand, which men of feeling sympathize with, to receive from Miss Cameron alone the rejection of my suit!"

"Unquestionably Miss Cameron will grant your lordship the interview you have a right to seek; but pardon me, I thought it might save you both much pain, if the meeting were prepared by a third person; and on any matter of business, any atonement to your lordship——"

"Atonement!—what can atone to me?" exclaimed Vargrave, as he walked to and fro the room in great disorder and excitement. "Can you give me back years of hope and expectancy—the manhood wasted in a vain dream? Had I not been taught to look to this reward,

should I have rejected all occasion—while my youth was not yet all gone, while my heart was not yet all occupied—to form a suitable alliance? Nay, should I have indulged in a high and stirring career, for which my own fortune is by no means qualified: Atonement!—atonement! Talk of atonement to boys! Sir! I stand before you a man whose private happiness is blighted, whose public prospects are darkened, life wasted, fortunes ruined, the schemes of an existence, built upon one hope, which was lawfully indulged, overthrown!—and you talk to me of *atonement!*"

Selfish as the nature of this complaint might be, Aubrey was struck with its justice.

"My lord," said he, a little embarrassed, "I cannot deny that there is truth in much of what you say, Alas! it proves how vain it is for man to calculate on the future, how ununhappily your uncle erred in imposing conditions, which the chances of life and the caprices of affection could at any time dissolve! But this is blame that attaches only to the dead: can you blame the living?"

"Sir, I considered myself bound by my uncle's prayer to keep my hand and heart disengaged, that this title—miserable and barren distinction though it be!—might, as he so ardently desired, descend to Evelyn. I had a right to expect similar honor upon her side!"

"Surely, my lord, you, to whom the late lord on his death-bed confided all the motives of his conduct and the secret of his life, cannot but be aware that, while desirious of promoting your worldy welfare, and uniting in one line, his rank and his fortune, your uncle still had Evelyn's happiness at heart as his warmest wish; you must know that, if that happiness were forfeited by a marriage with you, the marriage became but a secondary consideration. Lord Vargrave's will in itself was a proof of this. He did not impose, as an absolute condition, upon Evelyn, her union with yourself; he did not make the forfeiture of her whole wealth the penalty of her rejection of that alliance. By the definite limit of the forfeit, he intimated a distinction between a command and a desire. And surely, when you consider all circumstances, your lordship must think that, what with that forfeit and the estate settled upon the title, your uncle did all that, in a worldly point of view, equity, and even affection, could exact from him."

Vargrave smiled bitterly, but said nothing.

"And if this be doubted, I have clearer proof of his intentions. Such was his confidence in Lady Vargrave, that, in the letter he addressed to her before his death, and which I now submit to your lordship, you will observe that he not only expressly leaves it to Lady Vargrave's discretion to communicate to Evelyn that history of which she is at present ignorant, but that he also clearly defines the line of conduct he wished to be adopted with respect to Evelyn and yourself. Permit me to point out the passage."

Impatiently Lord Vargrave ran his eye over the letter placed in his hands, till he came to these lines:—

"And if, when she has arrived at the proper age to form a judgment, Evelyn should decide against Lumley's claims, you know that on no account would I sacrifice her happiness: all that I require is, that fair play be given to his pretensions—due indulgence to the scheme I have long had at heart. Let her be brought up to consider him her future husband, let her not be prejudiced against him, let her fairly judge for herself, when the time arrives."

"You see, my lord," said Mr. Aubrey, as he took back the letter, "that this letter bears the same date as your uncle's will. What he desired has been done. Be just, my lord—be just, and exonerate us all from blame; who can dictate to the affections?"

"And I am to understand that I have no chance, now or hereafter, of obtaining the affections of Evelyn? Surely, at your age, Mr. Aubrey, you cannot encourage the heated romance common to all girls of Evelyn's age. Persons of our rank do not marry like the Corydon and Phillis of a pastoral. At my years, I never was fool enough to expect that I should inspire a girl of seventeen with what is called a passionate attachment. But happy marriages are based upon suitable circumstances, mutual knowledge and indulgence, respect, esteem. Come, sir, let me hope yet—let me hope that, on the same day, I may congratulate you on your preferment and you may congratulate me upon my marriage."

Vargrave said this with a cheerful and easy smile; and the tone of his voice was that of a man who wished to convey serious meaning in a jesting accent.

Mr. Aubrey, meek as he was, felt the insult of the hinted bribe, and colored with a resentment no sooner excited than checked. "Excuse me, my lord, I have now said all—the rest had better be left to your ward herself."

"Be it so, sir. I will ask you, then, to convey my request to Evelyn to honor me with a last and parting interview."

Vargrave flung himself on his chair and Aubrey left him.

CHAPTER IX.

"Thus airy Strephon tuned his lyre."—SHENSTONE.

In his meeting with Evelyn, Vargrave certainly exerted to the utmost all his ability and all his art. He felt that violence, that sarcasm, that selfish complaint would not avail, in a man who was not loved,—though they are often admirable cards in the hands of a man who is. As his own heart was perfectly untouched in the matter, except by rage and disappointment—feelings which with him never lasted very long—he could play coolly his losing game. His keen and ready intellect taught him that all he could now expect was to bequeath sentiments of generous compassion, and friendly interest; to create a favorable impression, which he might hereafter improve; to reserve, in short, some spot of vantage-ground in the country, from which he was to affect to withdraw all his forces. He had known, in his experience of women, which, whether as an actor or a spectator, was large and various—though not among very delicate and refined natures—that a lady often takes a fancy to a suitor *after* she has rejected him; that, precisely *because* she has once rejected, she ultimately accepts him. And even this chance was, in circumstances so desperate, not to be neglected. He assumed, therefore, the countenance, the postures, and the voice of heart-broken but submissive despair; he affected a nobleness and magnanimity in his grief, which touched Evelyn to the quick, and took her by surprise.

"It is enough," said he, in sad and faltering accents; quite enough to me to know that you cannot love me,—that I should fail in rendering you happy: say no more, Evelyn, say no more! Let me spare you, at least, the pain your generous nature must feel in my anguish—I resign all pretensions to your hand: you are free!—may you be happy!"

"Oh, Lord Vargrave! oh, Lumley!" said Evelyn, weeping, and moved by a thousand recollections of early years. "If I could but prove in any other way my grateful sense of your merits—your too-partial appreciation of me—my regard for my lost benefactor—then, indeed, nor till then, could I be happy. Oh! that this wealth, so little desired by me, had been more at my disposal; but, as it is, the day that sees me in possession of it, shall see it placed under your disposition, your control. This is but justice—common justice to you; you were the nearest relation of the departed. I had no claim on him—none, but affection. Affection! and yet I disobey him!"

There was much in all this that secretly pleased Vargrave; but it only seemed to redouble his grief.

"Talk not thus, my ward, my friend—ah! still my friend," said he, putting his handkerchief to his eyes. "I repine not;—I am more than satisfied. Still let me preserve my privilege of guardian, of adviser—a privilege dearer to me than all the wealth of the Indies!"

Lord Vargrave had some faint suspicion that Legard had created an undue interest in Evelyn's heart; and on this point he delicately and indirectly sought to sound her. Her replies convinced him that if Evelyn had conceived any prepossession for Legard, there had not been time or opportunity to ripen it into deep attachment. Of Maltravers he had no fear. The habitual self-control of that reserved personage deceived him partly; and his low opinion of mankind deceived him still more. For, if there had been any love between Maltravers and Evelyn, why should the former not have stood his ground, and declared his suit? Lumley would have "*bah'd*" and "*pish'd*" at the thought of any punctilious regard for engagements so easily broken, having power either to check passion for beauty, or to restrain self-interest, in the chase of an heiress. He had known Maltravers ambitious; and with him, ambition and self-interest meant the same.

Thus, by the very *finesse* of his character—while Vargrave, ever with the worldly, was a keen and almost infallible observer—with nat-

ures of a more refined, or a higher order, he always missed the mark by overshooting. Besides, had a suspicion of Maltravers ever crossed him, Caroline's communications would have dispelled it. It was more strange that Caroline should have been blind; nor would she have been so, had she been less absorbed in her own schemes and destinies. All her usual penetration had of late settled in self; and an uneasy feeling—half arising from conscientious reluctance to aid Vargrave's objects—half from jealous irritation at the thought of Vargrave's marrying another—had prevented her from seeking any very intimate or confidential communication with Evelyn herself.

The dreaded conference was over; Evelyn parted from Vargrave with the very feelings he had calculated on exciting;—the moment he ceased to be her lover, her old childish regard for him recommenced. She pitied his dejection—she respected his generosity—she was deeply grateful for his forbearance. But still—still she was free; and her heart bounded within her at the thought.

Meanwhile, Vargrave, after his solemn farewell to Evelyn, retreated again to his own room, where he remained till his post-horses arrived. Then, descending into the drawing-room, he was pleased to find neither Aubrey nor Evelyn there. He knew that much affectation would be thrown away upon Mr. and Mrs. Merton; he thanked them for their hospitality, with grave and brief cordiality, and then turned to Caroline, who stood apart by the window.

"All is up with me at present," he whispered. "I leave you, Caroline, in anticipation of fortune, rank, and prosperity; that is some comfort. For myself, I see only difficulties, embarrassment, and poverty in the future; but I despond of nothing—hereafter you may serve me, as I have served you. Adieu!—— I have been advising Caroline not to spoil Doltimore, Mrs. Merton; he is conceited enough already. Good-by! God bless you all!—love to your little girls. Let me know if I can serve you in any way, Merton—good-by again!" And thus, sentence by sentence, Vargrave talked himself into his carriage. As it drove by the drawing-room windows, he saw Caroline standing motionless where he had left her: he kissed his hand—her eyes were fixed mournfully on his. Hard, wayward, and worldly, as Caroline Merton was, Vargrave was yet not worthy of the affection he had inspired; for she could *feel*, and he could not;—the distinction, perhaps, between the sexes. And there still stood Caroline Merton, recalling the last tones of that indifferent voice, till she felt her hand seized, and turned round to see Lord Doltimore, and smile upon the happy lover, persuaded that he was adored!

BOOK SIXTH.

Πῦρ σοὶ προσοίσω, κοὐ τὸ σὸν προσκήψομαι.—EURIP. *Androm.* 24.

I will bring fire to thee—I reck not of the place.

CHAPTER I.

* * * "This ancient city,
How wanton sits she amidst Nature's smiles!

* * * "Various nations meet,
As in the sea, yet not confined in space,
But streaming freely through the spacious streets."
—YOUNG.

* * * "His teeth he still did grind,
And grimly gnash, threatening revenge in vain."
—SPENSER.

"PARIS is a delighful place—that is allowed by all. It is delightful to the young, to the gay, to the idle; to the literary lion, who likes to be petted; to the wiser epicure, who indulges a more justifiable appetite. It is delightful to ladies, who wish to live at their ease, and buy beautiful caps; delightful to philanthropists, who wish for listeners to schemes of colonizing the moon: delightful to the haunters of balls, and ballets, and little theatres, and superb cafés, where men with beards of all sizes and shapes scowl at the English, and involve their intellects in the fascinating game of dominoes. For these, and for many others, Paris is delightful. I say nothing against it. But for my own part, I would rather live in a garret in London, than in a palace in the *Chaussée d' Antin.—Chacun à son mauvais goût.*

"I don't like the streets, in which I cannot walk but in the kennel: I don't like the shops, that contain nothing except what's at the window: I don't like the houses like prisons, which look upon a court-yard: I don't like the *beaux jardins*, which grow no plants save a Cupid in plaster: I don't like the wood fires, which demand as many *petits soins* as the women, and which warm no part of one but one's eyelids: I don't like the language, with its strong phrases about nothing, and vibrating like a pendulum between 'rapture' and 'desolation;' I don't like the accent, which one cannot get, without speaking through one's nose: I don't like the eternal fuss and jabber about books without nature, and revolutions without fruit: I have no sympathy with tales that turn on a dead jackass; nor with constitutions that give the ballot to the representatives, and withhold the suffrage from the people: neither have I much faith in that enthusiasm for the *beaux arts*, which shows its produce in execrable music, detestable pictures, abominable sculpture, and a droll something that I believe the *French* call POETRY. Dancing and cookery—these are the arts the French excel in, I grant it; and excellent things they are; but oh, England! oh Germany! you need not be jealous of your rival!"

These are not the author's remarks—he disowns them; they were Mr. Cleveland's. He was a prejudiced man;—Maltravers was more liberal, but then Maltravers did not pretend to be a wit.

Maltravers had been several weeks in the city of cities, and now he had his apartments in the gloomy but interesting Faubourg St. Germains, all to himself. For Cleveland, having attended eight days at a sale, and having moreover ransacked all the curiosity-shops, and shipped off bronzes, and cabinets, and Genoese silks, and *objets de vertu*, enough to have half furnished Fonthill, had fulfilled his mission, and returned to his villa. Before the old gentleman went, he flattered himself that change of air and scene had already been serviceable to his friend; and that time would

work a complete cure upon that commonest of all maladies, an unrequited passion, or an ill-placed caprice.

Maltravers, indeed, in the habit of conquering, as well as concealing emotion, vigorously and earnesly strove to dethrone the image that had usurped his heart. Still vain of his self-command, and still worshipping his favorite virtue of Fortitude, and his delusive philosophy of the calm Golden Mean, he would not weakly indulge the passion, while he had so sternly fled from its object. But yet the image of Evelyn pursued—it haunted him; it came on him unawares—in solitude—in crowds. That smile so cheering, yet so soft, that ever had power to chase away the shadow from his soul; that youthful and luxurious bloom of pure and eloquent thoughts, which was as the blossom of genius before its fruit, bitter as well as sweet, is born—that rare union of quick feeling and serene temper, which forms the very ideal of what we dream of in the mistress, and exact from the wife; all, even more, far more, than the exquisite form and the delicate graces of the less durable beauty, returned to him, after every struggle with himself: and time only seemed to grave, in deeper if more latent folds of his heart, the ineradicable impression.

Maltravers renewed his acquaintance with some persons not unfamiliar to the reader.

Valerie de Ventadour.—How many recollections of the fairer days of life were connected with that name! Precisely as she had never reached to his love, but only excited his fancy (the fancy of twenty-two!), had her image always retained a pleasant and grateful hue; it was blended with no deep sorrow—no stern regret—no dark remorse—no haunting shame.

They met again. Madame de Ventadour was still beautiful, and still admired—perhaps more admired than ever: for to the great, fashion and celebrity bring a second and yet more popular youth. But Maltravers, if rejoiced to see how gently Time had dealt with the fair Frenchwoman, was yet more pleased to read in her fine features a more serene and contented expression than they had formerly worn. Valerie de Ventadour had preceded her younger admirer through the "MYSTERIES OF LIFE;" she had learned the real objects of being; she distinguished between the Actual and the Visionary—the Shadow and the Substance; she had acquired content for the present, and looked with quiet hope towards the future. Her character was still spotless; or, rather, every year of temptation and trial had given it a fairer lustre. Love, that might have ruined, being once subdued, preserved her from all after danger.

The first meeting between Maltravers and Valerie was, it is true, one of some embarrassment and reserve: not so the second. They did but once, and that slightly, recur to the past: and from that moment, as by a tacit understanding, true friendship between them dated. Neither felt mortified to see that an illusion had passed away—they were no longer the same in each other's eyes. Both might be improved, and were so, but the Valerie and the Ernest of Naples were as things dead and gone! Perhaps Valerie's heart was even more reconciled to the cure of its soft and luxurious malady by the renewal of their acquaintance. The mature and experienced reasoner, in whom enthusiasm had undergone its usual change, with the calm brow and commanding aspect of sober manhood, was a being so different from the romantic boy, new to the actual world of civilized toils and pleasures—fresh from the adventures of Eastern wanderings, and full of golden dreams of poetry before it settles into authorship or action!

She missed the brilliant errors—the daring aspirations—even the animated gestures and eager eloquence — that had interested and enamoured her in the loiterer by the shores of Baiæ, or amidst the tomblike chambers of Pompeii. For the Maltravers now before her — wiser — better — nobler — even handsomer than of yore (for he was one whom manhood became better than youth)—the Frenchwoman could at any period have felt friendship without danger. It seemed to her, not as it really was, the natural *development*, but the very *contrast*, of the ardent, variable, imaginative boy, by whose side she had gazed at night on the moonlit waters and rosy skies of the soft Parthenope! How does time, after long absence, bring to us such contrasts between the one we remember and the one we see! And what a melancholy mockery does it seem of our own vain hearts, dreaming of impressions never to be changed, and affections that never can grow cool!

And now, as they conversed with all the ease of cordial and guileless friendship, how did Valerie rejoice in secret that upon that friendship there rested no blot of shame! and that she had not forfeited those consolations for a home without love, which had at last settled into cheerful nor unhallowed resignation—consolations only to be found in the conscience and the pride!

Monsieur de Ventadour had not altered, except that his nose was longer, and that he now wore a peruque in full curl, instead of his own straight hair. But, somehow or other—perhaps by the mere charm of custom—he had grown more pleasing in Valerie's eyes; habit had reconciled her to his foibles, deficiencies, and faults; and, by comparison with others, she could better appreciate his good qualities, such as they were—generosity, good-temper, good-nature, and unbounded indulgence to herself. Husband and wife have so many interests in common, that, when they have jogged on through the ups-and-downs of life a sufficient time, the leash which at first galled often grows easy and familiar; and unless the *temper*, or rather the disposition and the heart, of either be insufferable, what was once a grevious yoke becomes but a companionable tie. And for the rest, Valerie, now that sentiment and fancy were sobered down could take pleasure in a thousand things with her pining affections once, as it were, overlooked and overshot. She could feel grateful for all the advantages her station and wealth procured her; she could cull the roses in her reach, without sighing for the amaranths of Elysium.

If the great have more temptations than those of middle life, and if their senses of enjoyment become more easily pampered into a sickly apathy; so at least (if they can once outlive satiety) they have many more resources at their command. There is a great deal of justice in the old line, displeasing though it be to those who think of love in a cottage, "'tis best repenting in a coach and six!" If among the Eupatrids, the Well Born, there is less love in wedlock, less quiet happiness at home, still they are less chained each to each—they have more independence, both the woman and the man—and occupations and the solace without can be so easily obtained! Madame de Ventadour, in retiring from the mere frivolities of society—from crowded rooms, and the inane talk and hollow smiles of mere acquaintanceship—became more sensible of the pleasures that her refined and elegant intellect could derive from art and talent, and the communion of friendship.

She drew around her the most cultivated minds of her time and country. Her abilities, her wit, and her conversational graces, enabled her not only to mix on equal terms with the most eminent, but to amalgamate and blend the varieties of talent into harmony. The same persons, when met elsewhere, seemed to have lost their charm: under Valerie's roof every one breathed a congenial atmorphere. And music and letters, and all that can refine and embellish civilized life, contributed their resources to this gifted and beautiful woman. And thus she found that the *mind* has excitement and occupation, as well as the heart; and, unlike the latter, the culture we bestow upon the first ever yields us its return. We talk of education for the poor, but we forget how much it is needed by the rich. Valerie was a living instance of the advantages to women of knowledge and intellectual resources. By them she had purified her fancy—by them she had conquered discontent—by them she had grown reconciled to life, and to her lot! When the heavy heart weighed down the one scale, it was the mind that restored the balance.

The spells of Madame de Ventadour drew Maltravers into this charmed circle of all that was highest, purest, and most gifted in the society of Paris. There he did not meet, as were met in the times of the old *régime*, sparkling abbés intent upon intrigues; or amorous old dowagers, eloquent on Rousseau; or powdered courtiers, uttering epigrams against kings and religions—straws that foretold the whirlwind. Paul Courier was right! Frenchmen are Frenchmen still, they are full of fine phrases, and their thoughts smell of the theatre; they mistake foil for diamonds, the Grotesque for the Natural, the Exaggerated for the Sublime:—but still, I say, Paul Courier was right: there is more honesty in a single *salon* in Paris, than there was in all France in the days of Voltaire! Vast interests, and solemn causes are no longer tossed about like shuttlecocks on the battledores of empty tongues. In the *bouleversement* of Rovolution, the French have fallen on their feet!

Meeting men of all parties and all classes, Maltravers was struck with the heightened tone of public morals, the earnest sincerity of feeling which generally pervaded all, as compared with his first recollections of the Parisians. He saw that true elements for national wisdom were at work, though he saw also that there was no country in which their operations would be more liable to disorder, more slow and irregular in their results. The French are like the Israelites in the Wilderness, when, according to a Hebrew tradition, every morning they seemed on the verge of Pisgah, and every evening they were as far from it as ever. But still time rolls on, the pilgrimage draws to its close, and the Canaan must come at last!

At Valerie's house, Maltravers once more met the De Montaignes. It was a painful meeting, for they thought of Cesarini when they met.

It is now time to return to that unhappy man. Cesarini had been removed from England, when Maltravers quitted it after Lady Florence's death; and Maltravers had thought it best to acquaint De Montaigne with all the circumstances that had led to his affliction. The pride and the honor of the high-spirited Frenchman were deeply shocked by the tale of fraud and guilt, softened as it was; but the sight of the criminal, his awful punishment, merged every other feeling in compassion. Placed under the care of the most skilful practitioners in Paris, great hopes of Cesarini's recovery had been at first entertained. Nor was it long, indeed, before he appeared entirely restored; so far as the external and superficial tokens of sanity could indicate a cure. He testified complete consciousness of the kindness of his relations, and clear remembrance of the past: but to the incoherent ravings of delirium, an intense melancholy, still more deplorable, succeeded. In this state, however, he became once more the inmate of his brother-in-law's house; and, though avoiding all society, except that of Teresa, whose affectionate nature never wearied of its cares, he resumed many of his old occupations. Again he appeared to take delight in desultory and unprofitable studies, and in the cultivation of that luxury of solitary men, "the thankless muse." By shunning all topics connected with the gloomy cause of his affliction, and talking rather of the sweet recollections of Italy and childhood than of more recent events, his sister was enabled to soothe the dark hour, and preserve some kind of influence over the ill-fated man. One day, however, there fell into his hands an English newspaper, which was full of the praises of Lord Vargrave; and the article, in lauding the peer, referred to his services as the commoner Lumley Ferrers.

This incident, slight as it appeared, and perfectly untraceable by his relations, produced a visible effect on Cesarini; and three days afterwards he attempted his own life. The failure of the attempt was followed by the fiercest paroxysms. His disease returned in all its dread force; and it became necessary to place him under yet stricter confinement than he had endured before. Again, about a year from the date now entered upon, he had appeared to recover; and again he was removed to De Montaigne's house. His relations were not aware of the influence which Lord Vargrave's name exercised over Cesarini; in the melancholy tale communicated to them by Maltravers, that name had not been mentioned. If Maltravers had at one time entertained some vague suspicions that Lumley had acted a treacherous part with regard to Florence, those suspicions had long since died away for want of confirmation; nor did he (nor did therefore the De Montaignes) connect Lord Vargrave with the affliction of Cesarini. De Montaigne himself, therefore, one day at dinner, alluding to a question of foreign politics which had been debated that morning in the Chamber, and in which he himself had taken an active part, happened to refer to a speech of Vargrave's upon the subject, which had made some sensation abroad, as well as at home.—Teresa asked innocently who Lord Vargrave was? and De Montaigne, well acquainted with the biography of the principal English statesmen, replied, that he had commenced his career as Mr. Ferrers, and reminded Teresa that they had once been introduced to him in Paris.

Cesarini suddenly rose and left the room; his absence was not noted—for his comings and goings were ever strange and fitful. Teresa soon afterwards quitted the apartment with her children, and De Montaigne, who was rather fatigued by the exertions and excite-

ment of the morning, stretched himself in his chair to enjoy a short *siesta*. He was suddenly awakened by a feeling of pain and suffocation —awakened in time to struggle against a strong gripe that had fastened itself at his throat. The room was darkened in the growing shades of the evening; and, but for the glittering and savage eyes that were fixed on him, he could scarcely discern his assailant. He at length succeeded, however, in freeing himself, and casting the intended assassin on the ground. He shouted for assistance; and the lights, borne by the servants who rushed into the room, revealed to him the face of his brother-in-lay! Cesarini, though in strong convulsions, still uttered cries and imprecations of revenge; he denounced De Montaigne as a traitor and a murder! In the dark confusion of his mind, he had mistaken the guardian for the distant foe, whose name sufficed to conjure up the phantoms of the dead, and plunge reason into fury.

It was now clear that there was danger and death in Cessarini's disease. His madness was pronounced to be capable of no certain and permanent cure: he was placed at a new asylum (the superintendents of which were celebrated for humanity as well as skill), a little distance from Versailles, and there he still remained. Recently his lucid intervals had become more frequent and prolonged; but trifles that sprung from his own mind, and which no care could prevent or detect, sufficed to renew his calamity in all its fierceness. At such times he required the most unrelaxing vigilance; for his madness ever took an alarming and ferocious character; and had he been left unshackled, the boldest and stoutest of the keepers would have dreaded to enter his cell unarmed, or alone.

What made the disease of the mind appear more melancholy and confirmed was, that all this time the frame seemed to increase in health and strength. This is not an uncommon case in instances of mania—and it is generally the worst symptom. In earlier youth, Cesarini had been delicate even to effeminacy; but now his proportions were enlarged—his form (though still lean and spare) muscular and vigorous—as if in the torpor which usually succeeded to his bursts of frenzy, the animal portion gained by the repose or disorganization of the intellectual. When in his better and calmer moods in which indeed none but the experienced could have detected his malady —books made his chief delight. But then he complained bitterly, if briefly, of the confinement he endured—of the injustice he suffered; and as, shunning all companions, he walked gloomily amidst the grounds that surrounded that House of Woe, his unseen guardians beheld him clenching his hands, as at some visionary enemy; or overheard him accuse some phantom of his brain of the torments he endured.

Though the reader can detect in Lumley Ferrers the cause of the frenzy, and the object of the imprecation, it was not so with the De Montaignes, nor with the patient's keepers and physicians; for in his delirium he seldom or never gave name to the shadows that he invoked—not even to that of Florence. It is, indeed, no unusual characteristic of madness to shun, as by a kind of cunning, all mention of the names of those by whom the madness has been caused. It is as if the Unfortunates imagined that the madness might be undiscovered, if the images connected with it were unbetrayed.

Such, at this time, was the wretched state of the man, whose talents had promised a fair and honorable career, had it not been the wretched tendency of his mind, from boyhood upward, to pamper every unwholesome and unhallowed feeling as a token of the exuberance of genius. De Montaigne, though he touched as lightly as possible upon this dark domestic calamity in his first communications with Maltravers, whose conduct in that melancholy tale of crime and woe had, he conceived, been stamped with generosity and feeling,—still betrayed emotions that told how much his peace had been embittered.

"I seek to console Teresa," said he, turning away his manly head, "and to point out all the blessings yet left to her; but that brother so beloved, from whom so much was so vainly expected!—still ever and ever, though she strives to conceal it from me, this affliction comes back to her, and poisons every thought! Oh! better a thousand times that he had died! When reason, sense, almost the soul, are dead —how dark and fiend-like is the life that remains behind! And if it should be in the blood — if Teresa's children—dreadful thought!"

De Montaigne ceased, thoroughly overcome.

"Do not, my dear friend, so fearfully exaggerate your misfortune, great as it is; Cesarini's disease evidently arose from no physical conformation—it was but the crisis, the development, of a long-contracted malady of mind—passions, morbidly indulged—the reasoning faculty, obstinately neglected—and yet too he may recover. The farther memory recedes from the shock he has sustained, the better the chance that his mind will regain its tone."

De Montaigne wrung his friend's hand—

"It is strange that from you should come sympathy and comfort!—you whom he so injured!—you whom his folly or his crime drove from your proud career, and your native soil! But Providence will yet, I trust, redeem the evil of its erring creature, and I shall yet live to see you restored to hope and home, a happy husband, an honored citizen: till then, I feel as if the curse lingered upon my race."

"Speak not thus—whatever my destiny, I have recovered from that wound; and still, De Montaigne, I find in life that suffering succeeds to suffering, and disappointment to disappointment, as wave to wave. To endure is the only philosophy—to believe that we shall live again in a brighter planet, is the only hope that our reason should accept from our desires."

CHAPTER II.

"Monstra evenerunt mihi,
Introit in ædes ater alienus canis,
Anguis per impluvium decidit de tegulis,
Gallina cecinit!"—TERENT.*

WITH his constitutional strength of mind, and comformably with his acquired theories, Maltravers continued to struggle against the latest and strongest passion of his life. It might be seen in the paleness of his brow, and that nameless expression of suffering which betrays itself in the lines about the month, that his health was affected by the conflict within him; and many a sudden fit of absence and abstraction, many an impatient sigh, followed by a forced and unnatural gaiety, told the observant Valerie that he was the prey of a sorrow he was too proud to disclose. He compelled himself, however, to take, or to affect, an interest in the singutar phenomena of the social state around him; phenomena that, in a happier or serener mood, would indeed have suggested no ordinary food for conjecture and meditation.

The state of *visible transition* is the state of nearly all the enlightened communities in Europe. But nowhere is it so pronounced as in that country which may be called the Heart of European Civilization. There, all, to which the spirit of society attaches itself, appears broken, vague, and half developed—the Antique in ruins, and the New not formed. It is, perhaps, the only country in which the Constructive principle has not kept pace with the Destructive. The Has Been is blotted out—the To Be is as the shadow of a far land in a mighty and perturbed sea.*

Maltravers, who for several years had not examined the progress of modern literature, looked with mingled feelings of surprise, distaste, and occasional and most reluctant admiration on the various works which the successors of Voltaire and Rousseau have produced, and are pleased to call the offspring of Truth united to Romance.

Profoundly versed in the mechanism and elements of those masterpieces of Germany and England, from which the French have borrowed so largely, while pretending to be original, Maltravers was shocked to see the monsters which these Frankensteins had created from the relics and offal of the holiest sepulchres. The head of a giant on the limbs of a dwarf—incongruous members jumbled together—parts fair and beautiful—the whole a hideous distortion!

"It may be possible," said he to De Montaigne, "that these works are admired and extolled; but how they can be vindicated by the examples of Shakspeare and Goethe, or even if Byron, who redeemed poor and melodramatic conceptions with a manly vigor of execution, an energy and completeness of purpose that Dryden himself never surpassed, is to me utterly inconceivable."

* Prodigies have occured; a strange black dog came into the house; a snake glided from the tiles, through the court; the hen crowed.

* The reader will remember that these remarks were written long before the last French Revolution, and when the dynasty of Louis Philippe was generally considered most secure.

"I allow that there is a strange mixture of faustian and maudlin in all these things," answered De Montaigne; "but they are but the wind-falls of trees that may bear rich fruit in due season; meanwhile, any new school is better than eternal imitations of the old. As for critical vindications of the works themselves, the age that produces the phenomena is never the age to classify and analyze them. We have had a deluge, and now new creatures spring from the new soil."

"An excellent simile: they come forth from slime and mud—fetid and crawling—unformed and monstrous. I grant exceptions; and even in the New School, as it is called, I can admire the real genius—the vital and creative power of Victor Hugo. But oh, that a nation which has known a Corneille should ever spawn forth a * * * * ! And with these ricketty and drivelling abortions — all having followers and adulators—your Public can still bear to be told that they have improved wonderfully on the day when they gave laws and models to the literature of Europe;—they can bear to hear * * * * * proclaimed a sublime genius in the same circles which sneer down Voltaire!"

Voltaire is out of fashion in France, but Rousseau still maintains his influence, and boasts his imitators. Rousseau was the worse man of the two; perhaps he was also the more dangerous writer. But his reputation is more durable, and sinks deeper into the heart of his nation; and the danger of his unstable and capricious doctrines has passed away. In Voltaire we behold the fate of all writers purely destructive; their uses cease with the evils they denounce. But Rousseau sought to construct as well as to destroy; and though nothing could well be more absurd than his constructions, still man loves to look back and see even delusive images—castles in the air—reared above the waste where cities have been. Rather than leave even a burial-ground to solitude, we populate it with ghosts.

By degrees, however, as he mastered all the features of the French literature, Maltravers became more tolerant of the present defects, and more hopeful of the future results. He saw, in one respect, that that literature carried with it its own ultimate redemption.

Its general characteristic — contra distinguished from the literature of the old French classic school—is to take the *heart* for its study; to bring the passions and feelings into action, and let the Within have its record and history as well as the Without. In all this, our contemplative analyst began to allow that the French were not far wrong when they contended that Shakspeare made the fountain of their inspiration—a fountain which the majority of our later English Fictionists have neglected. It is not by a story woven of interesting incidents, relieved by delineations of the externals and surface of character, humorous phraseology, and everyday ethics, that Fiction achieves its grandest ends.

In the French literature, thus charactized, there is much false morality, much depraved sentiment, and much hollow rant. But still it carries within it the germ of an excellence, which, sooner or later, must, in the progress of national genius, arrive at its full development.

Meanwhile, it is a consolation to know, that nothing really immoral is ever permanently popular, or ever, therefore, long deleterious; what is dangerous in a work of genius, cures itself in a few years. We can now read Werter, and instruct our hearts by its exposition of weakness and passion—our taste by its exquisite and unrivalled simplicity of construction detail, without any fear that we shall shoot ourselves in top-boots! We can feel ourselves elevated by the noble sentiments of "The Robbers," and our penetration sharpened as to the wholesale immorality of conventional cant and hypocrisy, without any danger of turning banditti, and becoming cutthroats from the love of virtue. Providence, that has made the genius of the few in all times and countries the guide and prophet of the many; and appointed Literature, as the sublime agent of Civilization, of Opinion, and of Law, has endowed the elements it employs with a divine power of self-purification. The stream settles of itself by rest and time; the impure particles fly off, or are neutralized by the healthful. It is only fools that call the works of a master-spirit immoral. There does not exist in the literature of the world, one *popular* book that is immoral two centuries after it is produced. For, in the heart of nations, the False does not live so long; and the True is the Ethical to the end of time.

From the literary, Maltravers turned to the

political state of France his curious and thoughtful eye. He was struck by the resemblance which this nation—so civilized, so thoroughly European—bears in one respect to the despotisms of the East: the convulsions of the capital decide the fate of the country; Paris is the tyrant of France. He saw in this inflammable concentration of power, which must ever be pregnant with great evils, one of the causes why the revolutions of that powerful and polished people are so incomplete and unsatisfactory—why, like Cardinal Fleury, system after system, and Government after Government,

> * * "floruit sine fructu,
> Defloruit sine luctu." *

Maltravers regarded it as a singular instance of perverse ratiocination, that, unwarned by experience, the French should still persist in perpetuating this political vice; that all their policy should still be the policy of Centralization—a principle which secures the momentary strength, but ever ends in the abrupt distruction, of States. It is, in fact, the perilous tonic, which seems to brace the system, but drives the blood to the head—thus come apoplexy and madness. By centralization the provinces are weakened, it is true; but weak to assist as well as to oppose a Government—weak to withstand a mob. Nowhere, nowadays, is a mob so powerful as in Paris; the political history of Paris is the history of mobs. Centralization is an excellent quackery for a despot who desires power to last only his own life, and who has but a life-interest in the State; but to true liberty and permanent order, centralization is a deadly poison. The more the provinces govern their own affairs, the more we find every thing, even to roads and post-horses, are left to the people; the more the Municipal Spirit prevades every vein of the vast body, the more certain may we be that reform and change must come from universal opinion, which is slow, and constructs ere it destroys—not from public clamor, which is sudden, and not only pulls down the edifice, but sells the bricks!

Another peculiarity in the French Constitution struck and perplexed Maltravers. This people, so pervaded by the republican sentiment—this people, who had sacrificed so much for Freedom—this people, who in the name of Freedom, had perpetrated so much crime with Robespierre, and achieved so much glory with Napoleon—this people were, *as* a people, contented to be utterly excluded from all power and voice in the State! Out of thirty-three millions of subjects, less than two hundred thousand electors! Where was there ever an oligarchy equal to this? What a strange infatuation, to demolish an aristocracy and yet to exclude a people! What an anomaly in political architecture, to build an inverted pyramid! Where was the safety valve of governments—where the natural events of excitement in a population so inflammable? The people itself were left a mob: no stake in the State—no action in its affairs—no legislative interest in its security.*

On the other hand, it was singular to see how—the aristocracy of birth broken down—the aristocracy of letters had arisen. A Peerage, half composed of journalists, philosophers, and authors! This was the *beau idéal* of Algernon Sydney's Aristocratic Republic; of the Halvetian visions of what ought to be the dispensations of public distinctions: yet was it, after all, a desirable aristocracy? Did society gain?—did literature lose? Was the Priesthood of Genius made more sacred and more pure by these worldly decorations and hollow titles?—or was aristocracy itself thus rendered a more disinterested, a more powerful, or more sagacious element in the administration of law, or the elevation of opinion? These questions, not lightly to be answered, could not fail to arouse the speculation and curiosity of a man who had been familiar with the closet and the forum; and, in proportion as he found his interest excited in these problems to be solved by a foreign nation, did the thoughtful Englishman feel the old instinct—which binds the citizen to the father-land—begin to stir once more earnestly and vividly within him.

"You, yourself individually, are passing, like us," said De Montaigne one day to Maltravers, "through a state of transition. You have for ever left the Ideal, and you are carrying your cargo of experience over to the Practical. When you reach that haven, you will have completed the development of your forces."

* Flourished without fruit, and was destroyed without regret.

* Has not all this proved prophetic?

"You mistake me; I am but a spectator."

"Yes; but you desire to go behind the scenes. And he who once grows familiar with the green-room, longs to be an actor."

With Madame de Ventadour and the De Montaignes Maltravers passed the chief part of his time. They knew how to appreciate his nobler, and to love his gentler, attributes and qualities; they united in a warm interest for his future fate; they combated his Philosophy of Inaction; and they felt that it was because he was not happy that he was not wise. Experience was to him what ignorance had been to Alice. His faculties were chilled and dormant. As affection to those who are unskilled in all things, so is affection to those who despair of all things. The mind of Maltravers was a world without a sun!

CHAPTER III.

"Cœlebs quid agam?"—HORAT.

IN a room at Fenton's Hotel sate Lord Vargrave and Caroline Lady Doltimore — two months after the marriage of the latter.

"Doltimore has positively fixed, then, to go abroad, on your return from Cornwall?"

"Positively—to Paris. You can join us at Christmas, I trust?"

"I have no do doubt of it; and before then, I hope that I shall have arranged certain public matters, which at present harass and absorb me even more than my private affairs."

"You have managed to obtain terms with Mr. Douce, and to delay the repayment of your debt to him?"

"Yes, I hope so, till I touch Miss Cameron's income; which will be mine, I trust, by the time she is eighteen."

"You mean the forfeit money of 30,000*l.*?"

"Not I!—I mean what I said!"

"Can you really imagine she will still accept your hand?"

"With your aid, I do imagine it! Hear me. You must take Evelyn with you to Paris. I have no doubt but that she will be delighted to accompany you; nay, I have paved the way so far. For, of course, as a friend of the family, and guardian to Evelyn, I have maintained a correspondence with Lady Vargrave. She informs me that Evelyn has been unwell and low-spirited; that she fears Brook Green is dull for her, etc. I wrote in reply, to say, that the more my ward saw of the world, prior to her accession, when of age, to the position she would occupy in it, the more she would fulfil my late uncle's wishes with respect to her education, and so forth. I added, that as you were going to Paris—and as you loved her so much—there could not be a better opportunity for her entrance into life, under the most favorable auspices. Lady Vargrave's answer to this letter arrived this morning:—she will consent to such an arrangement, should you propose it."

"But what good will result to yourself in this project?—at Paris you will be sure of rivals, and ——"

"Caroline," interrupted Lord Vargrave, "I know very well what you would say; I also know all the danger I must incur. But it is a choice of evils; and I choose the least. You see that while she is at Brook Green, and under the eye of that sly old curate, I can effect nothing with her. There, she is entirely removed from my influence;—not so abroad—not so under your roof. Listen to me still further. In this country, and especially in the seclusion and shelter of Brook Green, I have no scope for any of those means which I shall be compelled to resort to, in failure of all else."

"What can you intend?" said Caroline, with a slight shudder.

"I don't know what I intend yet. But this, at least, I can tell you—that Miss Cameron's fortune I must and will have. I am a desperate man, and I can play a desperate game, if need be."

"And do you think that *I* will aid—will abet."

"Hush! not so loud! Yes, Caroline, you will, and you must, aid and abet me in any project I may form."

"Must! Lord Vargrave?"

"Ay!" said Lumley, with a smile, and sinking his voice into a whisper; "ay!—*you are in my power!*"

"Traitor!—you cannot dare—you cannot mean ——!"

"I mean nothing more than to remind you of the ties that exist between us—ties which

* What shall I do, a bachelor?

ought to render us the firmest and most confidential of friends. Come, Caroline, recollect all the benefits must not lie on one side; I have obtained for you rank and wealth; I have procured you a husband—you must help me to a wife!"

Caroline sunk back, and covered her face with her hands.

"I allow," continued Vargrave, coldly—"I allow that your beauty and talent were sufficient of themselves to charm a wiser man than Doltimore; but had I not suppressed jealousy—sacrificed love—had I dropped a hint to your liege lord—nay, had I not fed his lap-dog vanity by all the cream and sugar of flattering falsehoods—you would be Caroline Merton still!"

"Oh! would that I were! Oh! that I were anything but your tool—your victim! Fool that I was!—wretch that I am! I am rightly punished!"

"Forgive me—forgive me, dearest," said Vargrave, soothingly; "I was to blame, forgive me: but you irritated, you maddened me, by your seeming indifference to my prosperity—my fate. I tell you again and again, pride of my soul, I tell you, that you are the only being I love! and if you will allow me, if you will rise superior, as I once fondly hoped, to all the cant and prejudice of convention and education—the only woman I could ever respect, as well as love! Oh, hereafter, when you see me at that height to which I feel that I am born to climb, let me think that to your generosity, your affection, your zeal, I owed the ascent: at present I am on the precipice—without your hand I fall for ever. My own fortune is gone—the miserable forfeit due to me, if Evelyn continues to reject my suit, when she has arrived at the age of eighteen, is deeply mortgaged. I am engaged in vast and daring schemes, in which I may either rise to the highest station or lose that which I now hold. In either case, how necessary to me is wealth: in the one instance, to maintain my advancement; in the other, to redeem my fall."

"But did you not tell me," said Caroline, "that Evelyn proposed and promised to place her fortune at your disposal, even while rejecting your hand?"

"Absurd mockery!" exclaimed Vargrave; "the foolish boast of a girl—an impulse liable to every caprice. Can you suppose, that when she launches into the extravagance natural to her age, and necessary to her position, she will not find a thousand demands upon her rent-roll not dreamt of now? a thousand vanities and baubles, that will soon erase my poor and hollow claim from her recollection? Can you suppose that, if she marry another, her husband will ever consent to a child's romance? And even were all this possible, were it possible that girls were not extravagant, and that husbands had no common sense, is it for me, Lord Vargrave, to be a mendicant upon reluctant bounty? a poor cousin—a pensioned led-captain! Heaven knows I have as little false pride as any man, but still this is a degradation I cannot stoop to. Besides, Caroline, I am no miser, no Harpagon: I do not want wealth for wealth's sake, but for the advantages it bestows—respect—honor—position; and these I get as the husband of the great heiress. Should I get them as her dependant? No: for more than six years I have built my schemes and shaped my conduct, according to one assured and definite object; and that object I shall not now in the eleventh hour let slip from my hands. Enough of this: you will pass Brook Green in returning from Cornwall—you will take Evelyn with you to Paris—leave the rest to me. Fear no folly, no violence, from my plans, what ever they may be: I work in the dark. Nor do I despair that Evelyn will love, that Evelyn will voluntarily accept, me yet: my disposition is sanguine; I look to the bright side of things:—do the same!"

Here their conference was interrupted by Lord Doltimore, who lounged carelessly into the room, with his hat on one side. "Ah! Vargrave, how are you? You will not forget the letters of introduction? Where are you going, Caroline?"

"Only to my own room, to put on my bonnet; the carriage will be here in a few minutes." And Caroline escaped.

"So you go to Cornwall to-morrow, Doltimore?"

"Yes—cursed bore! but Lady Elizabeth insists on seeing us, and I don't object to a week's good shooting. The old Lady, too, has something to leave, and Caroline had no dowry: not that I care for it; but still marriage is expensive."

"By the by, you will want the five thousand pounds you lent me?"

"Why, whenever it is convenient."

"Say no more—it shall be seen to. Doltimore, I am very anxious that Lady Doltimore's *début* at Paris should be brillaint: every thing depends on falling into the right set. For myself, I don't care about fashion, and never did; but if I were married, and an idle man like you, it might be different."

"Oh, you will be very useful to us when we return to London. Meanwhile, you know, you have my proxy in the Lords. I dare say there will be some sharp work the first week or two after the recess."

"Very likely; and depend on one thing, my dear Doltimore, that when I am in the cabinet, a certain friend of mine shall be an earl. Adieu."

"Good-by, my dear Vargrave, good-by—and, I say,—I say, don't distress yourself about that trifle—a few months hence, it will suit me just as well."

"Thanks—I will just look into my accounts, and use you without ceremony. Well—I dare say we shall meet at Paris. Oh, I forgot!—I observe that you have renewed your intimacy with Legard. Now he is a very good fellow, and I gave him that place to oblige you——still, as you are no longer a *garçon*——but perhaps I shall offend you?"

"Not at all. What is there against Legard?"

"Nothing in the world—but he is a bit of a boaster. I dare say his ancestor was a Gascon—poor fellow!—and he affects to say that you can't choose a coat, or buy a horse, without his approval and advice—that he can turn you round his finger. Now this hurts your consequence in the world—you don't get credit for your own excellent sense and taste. Take my advice, avoid these young hangers-on of fashion—these club-room lions. Having no importance of their own, they steal the importance of their friends. *Verbum sap.*"

"You are very right—Legard *is* a coxcomb; and now I see why he talked of joining us at Paris."

"Don't let him do any such thing?—he will be telling the Frenchmen that her ladyship is in love with him—ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha!—a very good joke—poor Caroline!—very good joke! "Well, good-by once more;" and Vargrave closed the door.

"Legard go to Paris—not if Evelyn goes there!" muttered Lumley. "Besides, I want no partner in the little that one can screw out of this blockhead."

CHAPTER IV.

"Mr. Bumblecase, a word with you—I have a little business.

"Farewell, the goodly Manor of Blackacre, with all its woods, underwoods, and appurtenances whatever."
—WYCHERLEY: *Plain Dealer.*

In quitting Fenton's Hotel, Lord Vargrave entered into one of the clubs in St. James's Street: this was rather unusual with him, for he was not a club man. It was not his system to spend his time for nothing. But it was a wet December day—the House not yet assembled, and he had done his official business. Here, as he was munching a biscuit and reading an article in one of the ministerial papers—the heads of which he himself had supplied—Lord Saxingham joined, and drew him to the window.

"I have reason to think," said the earl, "that your visit to Windsor did good."

"Ah, indeed; so I fancied."

"I do not think that a certain personage will ever consent to the * * * * question; and the premier, whom I saw to-day, seems chafed and irritated."

"Nothing can be better—I know that we are in the right boat."

"I hope it is not true, Lumley, that your marriage with Miss Cameron is broken off; such was the *on dit* in the club, just before you entered."

"Contradict it, my dear lord,—contradict it. I hope by the spring to introduce Lady Vargrave to you. But who broached the absurd report?"

"Why, your *protégé*, Legard, says he heard so from his uncle, who heard it from Sir John Merton."

"Legard is a puppy, and Sir John Merton a jackass. Legard had better attend to his office, if he wants to get on; and I wish you'd tell him so. I have heard somewhere that he talks of going to Paris—you can just hint to him that he must give up such idle habits. Public functionaries are not now what they

were—people are expected to work for the money they pocket—otherwise Legard is a cleverish fellow, and deserves promotion. A word or two of caution from you will do him a vast deal of good."

"Be sure I will lecture him. Will you dine with me to-day, Lumley?"

"No. I expect my co-trustee, Mr. Douce, on matters of business—a *tête-à-tête* dinner."

Lord Vargrve had, as he conceived, very cleverly talked over Mr. Douce into letting his debt to that gentleman run on for the present; and, in the meanwhile, he had overwhelmed Mr. Douce with his condescensions. That gentleman had twice dined with Lord Vargrave; and Lord Vargrave had twice dined with him. The occasion of the present more familiar entertainment was in a letter from Mr. Douce, begging to see Lord Vargrave on particular business; and Vargrave, who by no means liked the word *business* from a gentleman to whom he owed money, thought that it would go off more smoothly if sprinkled with champagne.

Accordingly, he begged "My dear Mr. Douce" to excuse ceremony, and dine with him on Thursday, at seven o'clock—he was really so busy all the mornings.

At seven o'clock, Mr. Douce came. The moment he entered, Vargrave called out, at the top of his voice, "Dinner immediately!" And as the little man bowed, and shuffled, and fidgeted, and wriggled (while Vargrave shook him by the hand), as if he thought he was going himself to be spitted,—his host said, "With your leave, we'll postpone the budget till after dinner. It is the fashion nowadays to postpone the budgets as long as we can—eh? Well, and how are all at home? Devilish cold; is it not? So you go to your villa every day?—That's what keeps you in such capital health. You know I had a villa too—though I never had time to go there."

"Ah, yes—I think, I remember, at Ful-Ful-Fulham!" gasped out Mr. Douce. "Your poor uncle's—now Lady Var-Var-Vargrave's jointure-house. So——so——"

"She don't live there!" burst in Vargrave (far too impatient to be polite). "Too cockneyfied for her—gave it up to me—very pretty place, but d——d expensive. I could not afford it—never went there—and so, I have let it to my wine-merchant; the rent just pays his bill. You will taste some of the sofas and tables to-day in his champagne! I don't know how it is, I always fancy my sherry smells like my poor uncle's old leather chair: very odd smell it had—a kind of respectable smell! I hope you're hungry—dinner's ready."

Vargrave thus rattled away in order to give the good banker to understand that his affairs were in the most flourishing condition; and he continued to keep up the ball all dinner-time, stopping Mr. Douce's little, miserable, gasping, dace-like mouth, with "a glass of wine, Douce!" or "by the by, Douce," whenever he saw that worthy gentleman about to make the Æschylean improvement of the second person in the dialogue.

At length, dinner being fairly over, and the servants withdrawn, Lord Vargrave, knowing that sooner or later Douce would have his say, drew his chair to the fire, put his feet on the fender, and cried, as he tossed off his claret, "Now, Douce, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?"

Mr. Douce opened his eyes to their full extent, and then as rapidly closed them; and this operation he continued till, having snuffed them so much that they could by no possibility burn any brighter, he was convinced that he had not misunderstood his lordship.

"Indeed, then," he began, in his most frightened manner, "indeed—I—really your lordship is very good—I—I wanted to speak to you on business."

"Well, what can I do for you—some little favor, eh? Snug sinecure for a favorite clerk, or a place in the Stamp Office for your fat footman—John, I think you call him? You know, my dear Douce, you may command me."

"Oh, indeed—you are all good-good-goodness—but—but——"

Vargrave threw himself back, and shutting his eyes and pursing up his mouth, resolutely suffered Mr. Douce to unbosom himself without interruption. He was considerably relieved to find that the business referred to related only to Miss Cameron. Mr. Douce having reminded Lord Vargrave, as he had often done before, of the wishes of his uncle, that the greater portion of the money bequeathed to Evelyn should be invested in land, proceeded to say that a most excellent

opportunity presented itself for just such a purchase as would have rejoiced the heart of the late lord. A superb place, in the style of Blickling—deer-park six miles round—10,000 acres of land, bringing in a clear 8,000*l.* a-year—purchase-money only 240,000*l.* The whole estate was, indeed, much larger—18,000 acres; but then the more distant farms could be sold in different lots, in order to meet the exact sum Miss Cameron's trustees were enabled to invest.

"Well, said Vargrave, "and where is it? My poor uncle was after De Clifford's estate, but the title was not good."

"Oh! this—is much—much—much fi-fi-finer;—famous investment—but rather far off—in—in the north. Li-Li-Lisle Court."

"Lisle Court! Why, does not that belong to Colonel Maltravers?"

"Yes. It is, indeed, quite, I may say, a secret—yes—really—a se-se-secret—not in the market yet—not at all—soon snapped up."

"Humph! Has Colonel Maltravers been extravagant?"

"No—but he does not—I hear—or rather Lady—Julia—so I'm told, yes, indeed—does not li-like—going so far, and so they spend the winter in Italy instead. Yes—very odd—very fine place."

Lumley was slightly acquainted with the elder brother of his old friend—a man who possessed some of Ernest's faults—very proud, and very exacting, and very fastidious:—but all these faults were developed in the ordinary commonplace world, and were not the refined abstractions of his younger brother.

Colonel Maltravers had continued, since he entered the Guards, to be thoroughly the man of fashion, and nothing more. But rich and well-born, and highly connected, and thoroughly *à la mode* as he was, his pride made him uncomfortable in London, while his fastidiousness made him uncomfortable in the country. He was *rather* a great person, but he wanted to be a *very* great person. This he was a Lisle Court; but that did not satisfy him—he wanted not only to be a very great person, but a very great person among very great persons—and squires and parsons bored him. Lady Julia, his wife was a fine lady, inane and pretty, who saw everthing through her husband's eyes. He was quite master *chez lui*, was Colonel Maltravers! He lived a great deal abroad—for on the continent his large income seemed princely, while his high character, thorough breeding, and personal advantages, which were remarkable, assured him a greater position in foreign courts than at his own. Two things had greatly disgusted him with Lisle Court—trifles they might be with others, but they were not trifles to Cuthbert Maltravers;—in the first place, a man who had been his father's attorney, and who was the very incarnation of coarse unrepellible familiarity, had bought an estate close by the said Lisle Court, and had, *horresco referens*, been made a baronet!

Sir Gregory Gubbins took precedence of Colonel Maltravers! He could not ride out but he met Sir Gregory; he could not dine out but he had the pleasure of walking behind Sir Gregory's bright blue coat with its bright brass buttons. In his last visit to Lisle Court, which he had then crowded with all manner of fine people, he had seen—the very first morning after his arrival—seen from the large window of his state saloon, a great staring white, red, blue, and gilt thing, at the end of the stately avenue planted by Sir Guy Maltravers in honor of the Victory over the Spanish Armada. He looked in mute surprise, and every body else looked; and a polite German Count, gazing through his eye-glass, said, "Ah! dat is vat you call a vim in your *pays*—the vim of Colonel Maltravers!"

This "vim" was the pagoda summerhouse of Sir Gregory Gubbins—erected in imitation of the Pavilion at Brighton. Colonel Maltravers was miserable—the *vim* haunted him—it seemed ubiquitous—he could not escape it—it was bnilt on the highest spot in the county; ride, walk, sit where he would, the *vim* stared at him; and he thought he saw little Mandarins shake their round little heads at him. This was one of the great curses of Lisle Court—the other was yet more galling. The owners of Lisle Court had for several generations possessed the dominant interest in the county town. The Colonel himself meddled little in politics, and was too fine a gentleman for the drudgery of parliament:—he had offered the seat to Ernest, when the latter had commenced his public career; but the result of a communication proved that their political views were dissimilar, and the negotiation dropped without ill-feeling on either side.

Subsequently a vacancy occurred; and Lady Julia's brother (just made a Lord of the Treasury) wished to come into parliament, so the county town was offered to him. Now, the proud commoner had married into the family of a peer as proud as himself, and Colonel Maltravers was always glad whenever he could impress his consequence on his connections by doing them a favor. He wrote to his steward to see that the thing was properly settled, and came down on the nomination-day "to share the triumph and partake the gale." Guess his indignation, when he found the nephew of Sir Gregory Gubbins was already in the field! The result of the election was, that Mr. Augustus Gubbins came in, and that Colonel Maltravers was pelted with cabbage-stalks, and accused of attempting to *sell* the worthy and independent electors to a government nominee! In shame and disgust, Col-Maltravers broke up his establishment at Lisle Court, and once more retired to the continent.

About a week from the date now touched upon, Lady Julia and himself had arrived in London from Vienna; and a new mortification awaited the unfortunate owner of Lisle Court. A railroad company had been established, of which Sir Gregory Gubbins was a principal shareholder; and the speculator, Mr. Augustus Gubbins, one of the "most useful men in the house," had undertaken to carry the bill through parliament. Colonel Maltravers received a letter of portentous size, enclosing the map of the places which this blessed railway was to bisect; and lo! just at the bottom of his park ran a portentous line, which informed him of the sacrifice he was expected to make for the public good—especially for the good of that very county town, the inhabitants of which had pelted him with cabbage-stalks!

Colonel Maltravers lost all patience. Unacquainted with our wise legislative proceedings, he was not aware that a railway planned is a very different thing from a railway made; and that parliamentary committees are not by any means favorable to schemes for carrying the public through a gentleman's park.

"This country is not to be lived in," said he to Lady Julia; "it gets worse and worse every year. I am sure I never had any comfort in Lisle Court. I've a great mind to sell it."

"Why, indeed, as we have no sons, only daughters, and Ernest is so well provided for," said Lady Julia; "and the place is so far from London, and the neighborhood is so disagreeable, I think that we could do very well without it."

Colonel Maltravers made no answer, but he revolved the pros and cons; and then he began to think how much it cost him in gamekeepers, and carpenters, and bailiffs, and gardeners, and Heaven knows whom besides; and then the pagoda flashed across him; and then the cabbage-stalks: and at last he went to his solicitor.

"You may sell Lisle Court," said he quietly.

The solicitor dipped his pen in the ink. "The particulars Colonel?"

"Particulars of Lisle Court! every body, that is, every gentleman, knows Lisle Court!"

"Price, sir?"

'You know the rents—calculate accordingly. It will be too large a purchase for one individual; sell the outlying woods and farms separately from the rest."

"We must draw up an advertisement, colonel."

"Advertise Lisle Court!—out of the question, sir. I can have no publicity given to my intention: mention it quietly to any capitalist; but keep it out of the papers till it is all settled. In a week or two you will find a purchaser—the sooner the better."

Besides his horror of newspaper comments and newspaper puffs, Colonel Maltravers dreaded that his brother—then in Paris—should learn his intention, and attempt to thwart it; and, somehow or other, the colonel was a little in awe of Ernest, and a little ashamed of his resolution. He did not know that, by a singular coincidence, Ernest himself had thought of selling Burleigh.

The solicitor was by no means pleased with this way of settling the matter. However, he whispered it about that Lisle Court was in the market; and as it really was one of the most celebrated places of its kind in England, the whisper spread among bankers, and brewers, and soap-boilers, and other rich people—the Medici of the New Noblesse rising up amongst us—till at last it reached the ears of Mr. Douce.

Lord Vargrave, however bad a man he might be, had not many of those vices of

character which belong to what I may call the *personal class of vices*—that is, he had no ill will to individuals. He was not, ordinarily, a jealous man, nor a spiteful, nor a malignant, nor a vindictive man: his vices arose from utter indifference to all men, and all things—except as conducive to his own ends. He would not have injured a worm if it did him no good, but he would have set any house on fire, if he had no other means of roasting his own eggs. Yet still, if any feeling of personal rancor could harbor in his breast, it was first, towards Evelyn Cameron; and, secondly, towards Ernest Maltravers. For the first time in his life, he did long for revenge—revenge against the one for stealing his patrimony, and refusing his hand; and that revenge he hoped to gratify. As to the other, it was not so much dislike he felt, as an uneasy sentiment of inferiority.

However well he himself had got on in the world, he yet grudged the reputation of a man whom he had remembered a wayward, inexperienced boy: he did not love to hear any one praise Maltravers. He fancied, too, that this feeling was reciprocal, and that Maltravers was pained at hearing of any new step in his own career. In fact, it was that sort of jealousy which men often feel for the companions of their youth, whose characters are higher than their own, and whose talents are of an order they do not quite comprehend. Now, it certainly did seem, at that moment, to Lord Vargrave, that it would be a most splendid triumph over Mr. Maltravers of Burleigh, to be Lord of Lisle Court, the hereditary seat of the elder branch of the family: to be, as it were, in the very shoes of Mr. Ernest Maltravers' elder brother. He knew, too, that it was a property of great consequence: Lord Vargrave of Lisle Court would hold a very different position in the peerage from Lord Vargrave of——, Fulham! Nobody would call the owner of Lisle Court an adventurer; nobody would respect such a man of caring three straws about place and salary. And if he married Evelyn, and if Evelyn bought Lisle Court, would not Lisle Court be his? He vaulted over the *ifs*, stiff monosyllables though they were, with a single jump. Besides, even should the thing come to nothing, there was the very excuse he sought for joining Evelyn at Paris, for conversing with her, consulting her. It was true that the will of the late lord left it solely at the discretion of the trustees to select such landed investment as seemed best to them. But still it was, if not legally necessary, at least but a proper courtesy, to consult Evelyn. And plans, and drawings, and explanations, and rent-rolls, would justify him in spending morning after morning alone with her.

Thus cogitating, Lord Vargrave suffered Mr. Douce to stammer out sentence upon sentence, till at length, as he rang for coffee, his lordship stretched himself with the air of a man stretching himself into self-complacency or a good thing, and said:

"Mr. Douce, I will go down to Lisle Court as soon as I can—I will see it—I will ascertain all about it—I will consider favorably of it—I agree with you, I think it will do famously."

"But," said Mr. Douce, who seemed singularly anxious about the matter, "we must make haste, my lord; for really—yes, indeed—if—if—if Baron Roths—Rothschild should—that is to say——"

"Oh, yes, I understand—keep the thing close, my dear Douce; make friends with the colonel's lawyer; play with him a little, till I can run down."

"Besides, you see, you are such a good man of business, my lord—that you see, that—yes, really—there must be time to draw out the purchase-money—sell out at a prop—prop——"

"To be sure, to be sure—bless me, how late it is! I am afraid my carriage is ready! I must go to Madame de L——'s."

Mr. Douce, who seemed to have much more to say, was forced to keep it in for another time, and to take his leave.

Lord Vargrave went to Madame de L——'s. His position in what is called Exclusive Society was rather peculiar. By those who affected to be the best judges, the frankness of his manner, and the easy oddity of his conversation, were pronounced at variance with the tranquil serenity of thorough breeding. But still he was a great favorite both with fine ladies and dandies. His handsome keen countenance, his talents, his politics, his intrigues, and an animated boldness in his bearing, compensated for his constant violation of all the minutiæ of orthodox conventionalism.

At this house he met Colonel Maltravers, and took an opportunity to renew his acquaintance with that gentleman. He then referred, in a confidential whisper, to the communication he had received touching Lisle Court.

"Yes," said the colonel, "I suppose I must sell the place, if I can do so quietly. To be sure, when I first spoke to my lawyer it was in a moment of vexation, on hearing that the —— railroad was to go through the park, but I find that I overrated that danger. Still, if you will do me the honor to go and look over the place, you will find very good shooting; and when you come back you can see if it will suit you. Don't say any thing about it, when you are there; it is better not to publish my intention all over the county. I shall have Sir Gregory Gubbins offering to buy it, if you do!"

"You may depend on my discretion. Have you heard any thing of your brother lately?"

"Yes; I fancy he is going to Switzerland. He would soon be in England, if he heard I was going to part with Lisle Court!"

"What, it would vex him so?"

"I fear it would; but he has a nice old place of his own, not half so large, and therefore not half so troublesome, as Lisle Court."

"Ay! and he *did* talk of selling that nice old place."

"Selling Burleigh! you surprise me. But really country places in England *are* a bore. I suppose he has his Gubbins as well as myself!"

Here the chief minister of the government, adorned by Lord Vargrave's virtues, passed by, and Lumley turned to greet him.

The two ministers talked together most affectionately in a close whisper:—so affectionately, that one might have seen, with half an eye, that they hated each other like poison!

CHAPTER V.

"Inspicere tanquam in speculum, in vitas omnium Jubeo."*—TERENT.

ERNEST MALTRAVERS still lingered at Paris: he gave up all notion of proceeding further. He was, in fact, tired of travel. But there was another reason that chained him to that "Naval of the Earth"—there is not any where a better sounding-board to London rumors than the English *quartier* between the Boulevard des Italienness and the Tuileries; here, at all events, he should soonest learn the worst: and every day, as he took up the English newspapers, a sick feeling of apprehension and fear came over him. No! till the seal was set upon the bond—till the Rubicon was passed—till Miss Cameron was the wife of Lord Vargrave, he could neither return to the home that was so eloquent with the recollections of Evelyn, nor, by removing further from England, delay the receipt of an intelligence which he vainly told himself he was prepared to meet.

He continued to seek such distraction from thought as were within his reach; and, as his heart was too occupied for pleasures which had, indeed, long since palled,—those diatractions were of grave and noble character which it is a prerogative of the intellect to afford to the passions.

De Montaigne was neither a Doctrinaire nor a Republican—and yet, perhaps, he was a little of both. He was one who thought that the tendency of all European States is towards Democracy; but he by no means looked upon democracy, as a panacea for all legislative evils. He thought that, while a writer should be in advance of his time, a statesman should content himself with marching by its side; that a nation could not be ripened, like an exotic, by artificial means; that it must be developed only by natural influences. He believed that forms of government are never universal in their effects. Thus, De Mantaigne conceived that we were wrong in attaching more importance to legislative than to social reforms. He considered, for instance, that the surest sign of our progressive civilization is in our growing distaste to capital punishments. He believed, not in the ultimate *perfection* of mankind, but in their progressive *perfectibility*. He thought that improvement was indefinite; but he did not place its advance more under Republican than under Monarchical forms. "Provided," he was wont to say, "all our checks to power are of the right kind, it matters little to what hands the power itself is confided."

* I bid you look into the lives of all men, as it were into a mirror.

"Ægina and Athens," said he, "were republics—commercial and maritime—placed under the same sky, surrounded by the same neighbors, and rent by the same struggles between oligarchy and democracy. Yet, while one left the world an immortal heir-loom of genius—where are the poets, the philosophers, the statesmen, of the other? Arrian tells us of republics in India—still supposed to exist by modern investigators—but they are not more productive of liberty of thought, or ferment of intellect, than the principalities. In Italy there were commonwealths as liberal as the republic of Florence; but they did not produce a Machiavelli or a Dante. What daring thought, what gigantic speculation, what democracy of wisdom and genius, have sprung up amongst the despotisms of Germany! You cannot educate two individuals so as to produce the same results from both; you cannot, by similar constitutions (which are the education of nations) produce the same results from different communities. The proper object of statesmen should be, to give every facility to the people to develop themselves, and every facility to philosophy to dispute and discuss as to the ultimate objects to be obtained. But you cannot, as a practical legislator, place your country under a melon-frame: it must grow of its own accord."

I do not say whether or not De Montaigne was wrong; but Maltravers saw at least that he was faithful to his theories; that all his motives were sincere—all his practice pure. He could not but allow, too, that, in his occupations and labors, De Montaigne appeared to feel a sublime enjoyment;—that, in linking all the powers of his mind to active and useful objects, De Montaigne was infinitely happier than the Philosophy of Indifference, the scorn of ambition, had made Maltravers. The influence exercised by the large-souled and practical Frenchman over the fate and the history of Maltravers was very peculiar.

De Montaigne had not, apparently and directly, operated upon his friend's outward destinies; but he had done so indirectly, by operating on his mind. Perhaps it was he who had consolidated the first wavering and uncertain impulses of Maltravers towards literary exertion;—it was he who had consoled him for the mortifications at the early part of his career; and now, perhaps, he might serve, in the full vigor of his intellect, permanently to reconcile the Englishman to the claims of life.

There were, indeed, certain conversations which Maltravers held with De Montaigne, the germ and pith of which it is necessary that I should place before the reader,—for I write the inner as well as the outer history of a man; and the great incidents of life are not brought about only by the dramatic agencies of others, but also by our own reasonings and habits of thought. What I am now about to set down may be wearisome, but it is not episodical; and I promise that it shall be the last didactic conversation in the work.

One day, Maltravers was relating to De Montaigne all that he had been planning at Burleigh for the improvement of his peasantry, and all his theories respecting Labor-schools and Poor-rates, when De Montaigne abruptly turned round, and said—

"You have, then, really found that in your own little village, your exertions—exertions not very arduous, not demanding a tenth part of your time—have done practical good?"

"Certainly I think so," replied Maltravers, in some surprise.

"And yet it was but yesterday, that you declared 'that all the labors of Philosophy and Legislation were labors vain; their benefits equivocal and uncertain; that as the sea, where it loses in one place, gains in another, so civilization only partially profits us, stealing away one virtue while it yields another, and leaving the large proportions of good and evil eternally the same.'"

"True; but I never said that man might not relieve individuals by individual exertion; though he cannot by abstract theories—nay, even by practical action in the wide circle,—benefit the mass."

"Do you not employ on behalf of individuals the same moral agencies that wise legislation or sound philosophy would adopt towards the multitude? For example, you find that the children of your village are happier, more orderly, more obedient, promise to be wiser and better men in their own station of life, from the new, and I grant, excellent, system of school discipline and teaching that you have established. What you have done in one village, why should not legislation do throughout a kingdom? Again, you find that,

by simply holding out hope and emulation to industry—by making stern distinctions between the energetic and the idle—the independent exertion and the pauper-mendicancy—you have found a lever by which you have literally moved and shifted the little world around you. But what is the difference here between the rules of a village lord and the laws of a wise legislature? The moral feelings you have appealed to exist universally—the moral remedies you have practiced are as open to legislation as to the individual proprietor."

"Yes; but when you apply to a nation the same principles which regenerate a village, new counter-balancing principles arise. If I give education to my peasants, I send them into the world with advantages *superior* to their fellows; advantages which, not being common to their class, enable them to *outstrip* their fellows. But if this education were universal to the whole tribe, no man would have an advantage superior to the others; the knowledge they would have acquired being shared by all, would leave all as they now are, hewers of wood and drawers of water: the principle of individual hope, which springs from knowledge, would soon be baffled by the vast competition that *universal* knowledge would produce. Thus by the universal improvement would be engendered an universal discontent.

"Take a broader view of the subject. Advantages given to the *few* around me—superior wages—lighter toils—a greater sense of the dignity of man—are not productive of any change in society. Give these advantages to the *whole mass* of the laboring classes, and what in the small orbit is the desire of the *individual* to rise, becomes in the large circumference the desire of the *class* to rise; hence social restlessness, social change, revolution and its hazards. For revolutions are produced but by the aspirations of one order, and the resistance of the other. Consequently, legislative improvement differs widely from individual amelioration; the same principle, the same agency, that purifies the small body, becomes destructive when applied to the large one. Apply the flame to the log on the hearth, or apply it to the forest, is there no distinction in the result?—the breeze that freshens the fountain passes to the ocean, current impels current, wave urges wave, and the breeze becomes the storm?"

"Were there truth in this train of argument," replied De Montaigne; "had we ever abstained from communicating to the multitude the enjoyments and advantages of the Few—had we shruuk from the good, because the good is a parent of the change and its partial ills, what now would be society? Is there no difference in collective happiness and virtue between the painted Picts and the Druid worship, and the glorious harmony, light, and order, of the great English nation?"

"The question is popular," said Maltravers, with a smile; and, were you my opponent in an election, would be cheered on any hustings in the kingdom. But I have lived among savage tribes—savage, perhaps, as the race that resisted Cæsar; and their happiness seems to me, not perhaps the same as that of the few whose sources of enjoyment are numerous, refined, and save by their own passions, unalloyed; but equal to that of the mass of men in states the most civilized and advanced. The artisans, crowded together in the fœtid air of factories, with physical ills gnawing at the core of the constitution, from the cradle to the grave; drudging on from dawn to sunset, and flying for recreation to the dread excitement of the dram-shop, or the wild and vain hopes of political fanaticism,—are not in my eyes happier than the wild Indians with hardy frames, and calm tempers, seasoned to the privations for which you pity them, and uncursed with desires of that better state never to be theirs. The Arab in his desert has seen all the luxuries of the pasha in his harem; but he envies them not. He is contented with his barb, his tent, his desolate sands, and his spring of refreshing water.

"Are we not daily told—do not our priests preach it from their pulpits—that the cottage shelters happiness equal to that within the palace? Yet what the distinction between the peasant and the prince, differing from that between the peasant and the savage? There are more enjoyments and more privations in the one than in the other; but if, in the latter case, the enjoyments, though fewer, be more keenly felt,—if the privations, though apparently sharper, fall upon duller sensibilities and hardier frames,—your gauge of proportion loses all its value. Nay, in civ-

ilization there is for the mulitude an evil that exists not in the savage state. The poor man sees daily and hourly all the vast disparities produced by civilized society; and, reversing the divine parable, it is Lazarus who from afar, and from the despondent pit, looks upon Dives in the lap of Paradise: therefore, his privations, his sufferings, are made more keen by comparison with the luxuries of others. Not so in the desert and the forest. There, but small distinctions, and those softened by immemorial and hereditary usage—that has in it the sanctity of religion—separate the savage from his chief!

"The fact is, that in civilization we behold a splendid aggregate:—literature and science, wealth and luxury, commerce and glory; but we see not the million victims crushed beneath the wheels of the machine—the health sacrificed—the board breadless—the jails filled—the hospitals reeking—the human life poisoned in every spring, and poured forth like water! Neither do we remember all the steps, marked by desolation, crime, and bloodshed, by which this barren summit has been reached. Take the history of any civilized state—England, France, Spain before she rotted back into second childhood—the Italian Republics—the Greek Commonwealths—the Empress of the Seven Hills—what struggles, what persecutions, what crimes, what massacres! Where, in the page of history, shall we look back and say 'here improvement has diminished the sum of evil?' Extend, too, your scope beyond the state itself: each state has won its acquisitions by the woes of others. Spain springs above the Old World on the blood-stained ruins of the New; and the groans and the gold of Mexico produce the splendors of the Fifth Charles!

"Behold England—the wise, the liberal, the free England—through what struggles she has passed; and is she yet contented? The sullen oligarchy of the Normans—our own criminal invasions of Scotland and France—the plundered people—the butchered kings—the persecutions of the Lollards—the wars of Lancaster and York—the new dynasty of the Tudors, that at once put back Liberty, and put forward Civilization!—the Reformation, cradled in the lap of a hideous despot, and nursed by violence and Rapine—the stakes and fires of Mary; and the craftier cruelties of Elizabeth;—England, strengthened by the desolation of Ireland—the Civil Wars—the reign of Hypocrisy, followed by the reign of naked Vice;—the nation that beheaded the graceful Charles gaping idly on the scaffold of the lofty Sidney;—the vain Revolution of 1688, which, if a jubilee in England, was a massacre in Ireland—the bootless glories of Marlborough—the organized corruption of Walpole—the frantic war with our own American sons—the exhausting struggles with Napoleon!

"Well, we close the page—we say. Lo! a thousand years of incessant struggles and afflictions!—millions have perished, but Art has survived; our boors wear stockings, our women drink tea, our poets read Shakespeare, and our astronomers improve on Newton! Are we now contented? No! more restless than ever. New classes are called into power: new forms of government insisted on. Still the same catch-words—Liberty here, Religion there—Order with one faction, Amelioration with the other. Where is the goal, and what have we gained? Books are written, silks are woven, palaces are built—mighty acquisitions for the few—but the peasant is a peasant still! The crowd are yet at the bottom of the wheel; better off you say. No, for they are not more contented! The Artisan is as anxious for change as ever the Serf was; and the steam engine has its victims as well as the sword.

"Talk of legislation; all isolated laws pave the way to wholesale changes in the form of government! Emancipate Catholics, and you open the door to the democratie principle, that Opinion should be free. If free with the sectarian, it should be free with the elector. The Ballot is a corollary from the Catholic Relief-bill. Grant the Ballot, and the new corollary of enlarged suffrage. Suffrage enlarged is divided but by a yielding surface (a circle widening in the waters) from universal suffrage. Universal suffrage is Democracy. Is democracy better than the aristocratic commonwealth? Look at the Greeks, who knew both forms, are they agreed which is the best? Plato, Thucydides, Xenophon, Aristophanes—the Dreamer, the Historian, the Philosophic Man of Action, the penetrating Wit—have no ideals in Democracy! Algernon Sidney, the martyr of liberty, allows no government to the multitude. Brutus died for a republic, but a

republic of Patricians! What form of government is, then, the best? All dispute, the wisest cannot agree. The many still say 'a Republic;' yet, as you yourself will allow, Prussia, the Despotism, does all that Republics do. Yes, but a good Despot is a lucky accident; true, but a just and benevolent Republic is as yet a monster equally short-lived. When the people have no other tyrant, their own public opinion becomes one. No secret espionage is more intolerable to a free spirit than the broad glare of the American eye.

"A rural republic is but a patriarchal tribe—no emulation, no glory;—peace and stagnation. What Englishman—what Frenchman, would wish to be a Swiss? A commercial republic is but an admirable machine for making money. Is Man created for nothing nobler than freighting ships, and speculating on silk and sugar? In fact, there is no certain goal in legislation; we go on colonizing Utopia, and fighting phantoms in the clouds. Let us content ourselves with injuring no man, and doing good only in our own little sphere. Let us leave states and senates to fill the sieve of the Danaides, and roll up the stone of Sisyphus."

"My dear friend," said De Montaigne, "you have certainly made the most of an argument, which, if granted, would consign government to fools and knaves, and plunge the communities of mankind into the Slough of Despond. But a very common-place view of the question might suffice to shake your system. Is life, mere animal life, on the whole, a curse or a blessing?"

"The generality of men in all countries," answered Maltravers, "enjoy existence, and apprehend death;—were it otherwise, the world had been made by a Fiend, and not a God!"

"Well, then, observe how the progress of society cheats the grave! In great cities, where the effect of civilization must be the most visible, the diminution of mortality in a corresponding ratio with the increase of civilization is most remarkable. In Berlin, from the year 1747 to 1755, the annual mortality was as one to twenty-eight; but from 1816 to 1822, it was as one to thirty-four! You ask what England has gained by her progress in the arts? I will answer you by her bills of mortality. In London, Birmingham, and Liverpool, deaths have decreased in less than a century from one to twenty, to one to forty (precisely one-half!). Again, whenever a community—nay, a single city, decreases in civilization, and in its concomitants, activity and commerce, its mortality instantly increases. But if civilization be favorable to the prolongation of life, must it not be favorable to all that blesses life—to bodily health, to mental cheerfulness, to the capacities for enjoyment? And how much more grand, how much more sublime, becomes the prospect of gain, if we reflect that, to each life thus called forth, there is a soul—a destiny beyond the grave,—multiplied immortalities!

"What an apology for the continued progress of states! But you say that, however we advance, we continue impatient and dissatisfied: can you really suppose that, because man in every state is discontented with his lot, there is no difference in the *degree* and *quality* of his discontent—no distinction between pining for bread and longing for the moon? Desire is implanted within us, as the very principle of existence; the physical desire fills the world, and the moral desire improves it; where there is desire, there must be discontent; if we are satisfied with all things, desire is extinct. But a certain degree of discontent is not incompatible with happiness, nay, it has happiness of its own; what happiness like hope?—what is hope, but desire? The European serf, whose seigneur could command his life, or insist as a right on the chastity of his daughter, desires to better his condition. God has compassion on his state; Providence calls into action the ambition of leaders, the contests of faction, the movement of men's aims and passions: a change passes through society and legislation, and the serf becomes free!

"He desires still, but what?—no longer personal security, no longer the privileges of life and health; but higher wages, greater comfort, easier justice for diminished wrongs. Is there no difference in the quality of that desire? Was one a greater torment than the other is? Rise a scale higher:—A new class is created—the Middle Class—the express creature of Civilization. Behold the burgher and the citizen, still struggling, still contending, still desiring, and therefore still discontented. But the discontent does not prey upon the springs of life: it is the discontent of *hope*, not *despair*;

it calls forth faculties, energies, and passions, in which there is more joy than sorrow. It is this desire which makes the citizen in private life an anxious father, a careful master, an *active*, and therefore not an unhappy man. You allow that individuals can effect individual good: this very restlessness, this very discontent with the exact place that he occupies, makes the citizen a benefactor in his narrow circle. Commerce, better than charity, feeds the hungry, and clothes the naked. Ambition, better than brute affection, gives education to our children, and teaches them the love of industry, the pride of independence, the respect for others and themselves!"

"In other words, a deference to such qualities as can best fit them to get on in the world, and make the most money!"

"Take that view if you will; but the wiser, the more civilized the state, the worse chances for the rogue to get on!—there may be some art, some hypocrisy, some avarice,—nay, some hardness of heart, in paternal example and professional tuition. But what are such sober infirmities to the vices that arise from defiance and despair? Your savage has his virtues, but they are mostly physical, fortitude, abstinence, patience:—Mental and moral virtues must be numerous or few, in proportion to the range of ideas and the exigencies of social life. With the savage, therefore, they must be fewer than with civilized men; and they are consequently limited to those simple and rude elements which the safety of his state renders necessary to him. He is usually hospitable; sometimes honest. But vices are necessary to his existence, as well as virtues: he is at war with a tribe that may destroy his own; and treachery without scruple, cruelty without remorse, are essential to him; he feels their necessity, and calls them *virtues!* Even the half-civilized man, the Arab whom you praise, imagines he has a necessity for your money; and his robberies become virtues to him. But in civilized states, vices are at least not necessary to the existence of the majority; they are not, therefore, worshipped as virtues. Society unites against them; treachery, robbery, massacre, are not essential to the strength or safety of the community: they exist, it is true, but they are not cultivated, but punished. The thief in St. Giles's has the virtues of your savage: he is true to his companions, he is brave in danger, he is patient in privation; he practises the virtues necessary to the bonds of his calling and the tacit laws of his vocation. He might have made an admirable savage; but surely the mass of civilized men are better than the thief?"

Maltravers was struck, and paused a little before he replied; and then he shifted his ground. "But at least all our laws, all our efforts, must leave the multitude in every state condemned to a labor that deadens intellect, and a poverty that embitters life."

"Supposing this were true, still there are multitudes besides *the* multitude. In each state Civilization produces a middle class, more numerous to-day than the whole peasantry of a thousand years ago. Would Movement and Progress be without their divine uses, even if they limited their effect to the production of such a class? Look also to the effect of art, and refinement, and just laws, in the wealthier and higher classes. See how their very habits of life tend to increase the sum of enjoyment—see the mighty activity that their very luxury, the very frivolity of their pursuits, create! Without an aristocracy, would their have been a middle class? without a middle class, would there ever have been an interposition between lord and slave? Before Commerce produces a middle class, Religion creates one. The Priesthood, whatever its errors, was the curb to Power.

"But, to return to the multitude—you say that in all times they are left the same. Is it so? I come to statistics again: I find that not only civilization, but liberty, has a prodigious effect upon human life. It is, as it were, by the instinct of self-preservation that liberty is so passionately desired by the multitude. A negro slave, for instance, dies annually as one to five or six, but a free African in the English service only as one to thirty-five! Freedom is not, therefore, a mere abstract dream—a beautiful name—a platonic aspiration: it is interwoven with the most practical of all blessings, life itself! And can you say fairly, that, by laws, labor cannot be lightened and poverty diminished? We have granted already, that since there are degrees in discontent, there is a difference between the peasant and the serf;—how know you what the peasant a thousand years hence may be? Discontented, you will say—still discontented.

Yes; but if he had not been discontented, he would have been a serf still! Far from quelling this desire to better himself, we ought to hail it as the source of his perpetual progress. That desire to him is often like imagination to the poet, it transports him into the Future—

'Crura sonant ferro, sed canit inter opus'—

it is, indeed, the gradual transformation from the desire of Despair to the desire of Hope, that makes the difference between man and man—between misery and bliss."

"And then comes the crisis. Hope ripens into deeds; the stormy revolution, perhaps the armed despotism; the relapse into the second infancy of states!"

"Can we, with new agencies at our command—new morality—new wisdom—predicate of the Future by the Past? In ancient states, the mass were slaves; civilization and freedom rested with obligarchies; in Athens 20,000 citizens, 400,000 slaves! How easy decline, degeneracy, overthrow, in such states—a handful of soldiers and philosophers without a People! Now we have no longer barriers to the circulation of the blood of states. The absence of slavery, the existence of the Press; the healthful proportions of kingdoms, neither too confined nor too vast; have created new hopes, which history cannot destroy. As a proof, look to all late revolutions: in England the Civil Wars, the Reformation,—in France her awful Saturnalia, her military despotism! Has either nation fallen back? The deluge passes, and behold, the face of things more glorious than before! Compare the French of to-day with the French of the old *régime*. You are silent; well, and if in all states there is ever some danger of evil in their activity, is that a reason why you are to lie down inactive?—why you are to leave the crew to battle for the helm? How much may individuals, by the diffusion of their own thoughts, in letters or in action, regulate the order of vast events—now prevent—now soften—now animate—now guide! And is a man, to whom Providence and Fortune have imparted such prerogatives, to stand aloof, because he can neither forsee the Future nor create Perfection? And you talk of no certain and definite goal! How know we that there is a certain and definite goal, even in Heaven? how know we that excellence may not be illimitable? Enough that we improve—that we proceed: Seeing in the great design of earth that benevolence is an attribute of the Designer, let us leave the rest to Posterity and to God."

"You have disturbed many of my theories," said Maltravers, candidly; "and I will reflect on our conversation: but, after all, is every man to aspire to influence others? to throw his opinions into the great scales in which human destinies are weighed? Private life is not criminal. It is no virtue to write a book, or to make a speech. Perhaps, I should be as well engaged in returning to my country village, looking at my schools, and wrangling with the parish overseers——"

"Ah," interrupted the Frenchman, laughing; "if I have driven you to this point, I will go no further. Every state of life has its duties; every man must be himself the judge of what he is most fit for. It is quite enough that he desires to be active, and labors to be useful; that he acknowledges the precept, 'never to be weary in well-doing.' The divine appetite once fostered, let it select its own food. But the man who, after fair trial of his capacities, and with all opportunity for their full development before him, is convinced that he has faculties which private life cannot wholly absorb must not repine that Human Nature is not perfect, when he refuses even to exercise the gifts he himself possesses."

Now these arguments have been very tedious; in some places they have been old and trite; in others they may appear too much to appertain to the abstract theory of first principles. Yet from such arguments, *pro* and *con*, unless I greatly mistake, are to be derived corollaries equally practical and sublime; the virtue of Action—the obligations of Genius—and the philosophy that teaches us to confide in the destinies, and labor in the service, of mankind.

CHAPTER VI.

"I'll tell you presently her very picture:
Stay—yes it is so—Lelia."
—*The Captain*, Act v., Scene 1.

MALTRAVERS had not shrunk into a system of false philosophy from wayward and sickly

dreams, from resolute self-delusion; on the contrary, his errors rested on his convictions —the convictions disturbed, the errors were rudely shaken.

But when his mind began restlessly to turn once more towards the duties of active life; when he recalled all the former drudgeries and toils of political conflict, or the wearing fatigues of literature, with its small enmities, its false friendships, and its meagre and capricious rewards:—ah! then, indeed, he shrunk in dismay from the thoughts of the solitude at home! No lips to console in dejection, no heart to sympathize in triumph, no love within to counter-balance the hate without—and the best of man, his household affections, left to wither away, or to waste themselves on ideal images, or melancholy remembrance.

It may, indeed, be generally remarked (contrary to a common notion), that the men who are most happy at home are the most active abroad. The animal spirits are necessary to healthful action; and dejection and the sense of solitude will turn the stoutest into dreamers. The hermit is the antipodes of the citizen; and no gods animate and inspire us like the Lares.

One evening, after an absence from Paris of nearly a fortnight, at De Montaigne's villa, in the neighborhood of St. Cloud, Maltravers, who, though he no longer practised the art, was not leas fond than heretofore of music, was seated in Madame de Vantedour's box at the Italian Opera; and Valerie, who was above all the woman's jealousy of beauty, was expatiating with great warmth of eulogium upon the charms of a young English lady whom she had met at Lady G——'s the preceding evening

"She is just my *beau idéal* of the true English beauty," said Valerie: "it is not only the exquisite fairness of the complexion, nor the eyes so purely blue, which the dark lashes relieve from the coldness common to the light eyes of the Scotch and Germans,—that are so beautifully national, but the simplicity of manner, the unconsciousness of admiration, the mingled modesty and sense of the expression. No, I have seen women more beautiful, but I never saw one more lovely: you are silent—I expected some burst of patriotism in return for my compliment to your countrywoman!"

"But I am so absorbed in that wonderful Pasta——"

"You are no such thing; your thoughts are far away. But can you tell me anything about my fair stranger and her friends? In the first place, there is a Lord Doltimore, whom I knew before—you need say nothing about him; in the next, there is his new-married bride, handsome, dark—but you are not well!"

"It was the draught from the door—go on I beseech you—the young lady—the friend, her name?"

"Her name I do not remember; but she was engaged to be married to one of your statesmen, Lord Vargrave—the marriage is broken off—I know not if that be the cause of a certain melancholy in her countenance—a melancholy I am sure not natural to its Hebe-like expression.—But who have just entered the opposite box? Ah, Mr. Maltravers, do look, there is the beautiful English girl!"

And Maltravers raised his eyes, and once more beheld the countenance of Evelyn Cameron!

BOOK SEVENTH.

Δύκηστις ἀγνὼς λόγων
ἦλθε.—SOPH. *Œdip. Tyran.* 681.

"Words of dark import gave suspicion birth."—POTTER.

CHAPTER I.

"*Luce.* Is the wind there?
That makes for me.
Isab. Come—I forget a business."
—*Wit without Money.*

LORD VARGRVE's travelling carriage was at his door, and he himself was putting on his great-coat in his library, when Lord Saxingham entered.

"What! you are going into the country?"

"Yes—I wrote you word—to see Lisle Court."

"Ay, true; I had forgot. Somehow or other my memory is not so good as it was."

"But, let me see, Lisle Court is in ——shire. Why, you will pass within ten miles of C*****."

"C*****! shall I? I am not much versed in the geography of England—never learned it at school. As for Poland, Kamschatka, Mexico, Madagascar, or any other place as to which knowledge would be *useful*, I have every inch of the way at my fingers' end. But *àpropos* of C***** it is the town in which my late uncle made his fortune."

"Ah, so it is. I recollect you were to have stood for C*****, but gave it up to Staunch; very handsome in you. Have you any interest there still?"

"I think my ward has some tenants,—a street or two,—one called Richard Street, and the other Templeton Place. I had intended some weeks ago to have gone down there, and seen what interest was still left to our family; but Staunch himself told me that C***** was a sure card.

"So he thought; but he has been with me this morning in great alarm: he now thinks he shall be thrown out. A Mr. Winsley, who has a great deal of interest there, and was a supporter of his, hangs back on account of the **** question. This is unlucky, as Staunch is quite with *us;* and if he were to rat now it would he most unfortunate."

"Winsley! Winsley!—my poor uncle's right-hand man. A great brewer—always chairman of the Templeton Committee. I know the name, though I never saw the man."

"If you could take C***** in your way?"

"To be sure. Staunch must not be lost. We cannot throw away a single vote, much more one of such weight,—eighteen stone at the least! I'll stop at C***** on pretence of seeing after my ward's houses, and have a quiet conference with Mr. Winsley. Hem! Peers must not interfere in elections—eh? Well, good-by; take care of yourself. I shall be back in a week, I hope,—perhaps less."

In a minute more, Lord Vargrave and Mr. George Frederick Augustus Howard, a slim young gentleman of high birth and connections, but who, having, as a portionless cadet, his own way to make in the world, condescended to be his lordship's private secretary, were rattling over the streets the first stage to C*****.

It was late at night when Lord Vargrave arrived at the head inn of that grave and respectable cathedral city, in which once Richard Templeton, Esq.,—saint, banker, aud politician,—had exercised his dictatorial sway. *Sic transit gloria mundi!* As he warmed his hands by the fire in the large wainscoted apartment into which he was shown, his eye

met a full-length engraving of his uncle, with a roll of paper in his hands,—meant for a parliamentary bill for the turnpike trusts in the neighborhood of C * * * * *. The sight brought back his recollections of that pious and saturnine relation, and insensibly the minister's thoughts flew to his death-bed, and to the strange secret which in that last hour he had revealed to Lumley,—a secret which had done much in deepening Lord Vargrave's contempt for the forms and conventionalities of decorous life. And here it may be mentioned—though in the course of this volume a penetrating reader may have guessed as much as that, whatever that secret, it did not refer expressly or exclusively to the late lord's singular and ill-assorted marriage. Upon that point much was still left obscure to arouse Lumley's curiosity, had he been a man whose curiosity was very vivacious. But on this he felt but little interest. He knew enough to believe that no further information could benefit himself personally; why should he trouble his head with what never would fill his pockets?

An audible yawn from the slim secretary roused Lord Vargrave from his revery.

"I envy you, my young friend," said he, good-humoredly. "It is a pleasure we lose as we grow older—that of being sleepy. However, 'to bed,' as Lady Macbeth says. Faith, I don't wonder the poor devil of a thane was slow in going to bed with such a tigress. Good night to you."

CHAPTER II.

"Ma fortune va prendre une face nouvelle."*
—RACINE: *Androm.* Act i. Scene i.

THE next morning Vargrave inquired the way to Mr. Winsley's, and walked alone to the house of the brewer. The slim secretary went to inspect the cathedral.

Mr. Winsley was a little thick set man, with a civil but blunt electioneering manner. He started when he heard Lord Vargrave's name, and bowed with great stiffness. Vargrave saw at a glance that there was some cause of a grudge in the mind of the worthy man; nor did Mr. Winsley long hesitate before he cleansed his bosom of its perilous stuff.

"This is an unexpected honor, my lord: I don't know how to account for it."

"Why, Mr. Winsley, your friendship with my late uncle can, perhaps, sufficiently explain and apologize for a visit from a nephew sincerely attached to his memory."

"Humph! I certainly did do all in my power to promote Mr. Templeton's interest. No man, I may say, did more; and yet I don't think it was much thought of at the moment he turned his back upon the electors of C * * * * *. Not that I bear any malice; I am well to do, and value no man's favor—no man's, my lord!"

"You amaze me! I always heard my poor uncle speak of you in the highest terms."

"Oh!—well, it don't signify—pray say no more of it. Can I offer your lordship a glass of wine?"

"No, I am much obliged to you; but we really must set this little matter right. You know that after his marriage my uncle never revisited C * * * * *; and that shortly before his death he sold the greater part of his interest in this city. His young wife, I suppose, liked the neighborhood of London; and when elderly gentlemen *do* marry, you know, they are no longer their own masters; but if you had ever come to Fulham—ah! then, indeed, my uncle would have rejoiced to see his old friend."

"Your lordship thinks so," said Mr. Winsley, with a sardonic smile. "You are mistaken; I did call at Fulham; and though I sent in my card, Lord Vargrave's servant (he was then My Lord) brought back word that his lordship was not at home."

"But that must have been true; he was out, you may depend on it."

"I saw him at the window, my lord," said Mr. Winsley taking a pinch of snuff.

(Oh, the deuce! I'm in for it, thought Lumley). "Very strange, indeed! but how can you account for it? Ah! perhaps the health of Lady Vargrave—she was so very delicate then, and my poor uncle lived for her—you know that he left all his fortune to Miss Cameron?"

"Miss Cameron!—Who is she, my lord?"

"Why, his daughter-in-law; Lady Vargrave was a widow—a Mrs. Cameron."

* My fortune is about to take a turn.

"Mrs. Cam——. I remember now—they put Cameron in the newspapers; but I thought it was a mistake. But, perhaps" (added Winsley, with a sneer of peculiar malignity), —"perhaps, when your worthy uncle thought of being a peer, he did not like to have it known that he married so much beneath him."

"You quite mistake, my dear sir; my uncle never denied that Mrs. Cameron was a lady of no fortune or connections—widow to some poor Scotch gentleman, who died, I think, in India."

"He left her very ill off, poor thing; but she had a great deal of merit, and worked hard—she taught my girls to play——"

"Your girls!—did Mrs. Cameron ever reside in C * * * * * *?"

"To be sure; but she was then called Mrs. Butler—just as pretty a name, to my fancy."

"You must make a mistake; my uncle married this lady in Devonshire."

"Very possibly," quoth the brewer, doggedly. "Mrs. Butler left the town with her little girl, some time before Mr. Templeton married.

"Well, you are wiser than I am," said Lumley, forcing a smile. "But how can you be sure that Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Cameron are one and the same person? You did not go into the house—you could not have seen Lady Vargrave" (and here Lumley shrewdly guessed —if the tale were true—at the cause of his uncle's exclusion of his old acquaintance).

"No; but I saw her ladyship on the lawn," said Mr. Winsley, with another sardonic smile; "and I asked the porter at the lodge as I went out, if that was Lady Vargrave, and he said 'yes.' However, my lord, by-gones are by-gones—I bear no malice; your uncle was a good man; and if he had but said to me, 'Winsley, don't say a word about Mrs. Butler,' he might have reckoned on me just as much as when in his elections he used to put five thousand pounds in my hands, and say, "Winsley, no bribery—it is wicked; let this be given in charity.' Did any one ever know how that money went? Was your uncle ever accused of corruption?—But, my Lord, surely you will take some refreshment?"

"No, indeed; but if you will let me dine with you to-morrow, you'll oblige me much;—and, whatever my uncle's faults (and latterly, poor man, he was hardly in his senses;—what a will he made!) let not the nephew suffer for them. Come, Mr. Winsley," and Lumley held out his hand with enchanting frankness, "you know my motives are disinterested—I have no interest parliamentary to serve—we have no constituents for our Hospital of Incurables;—and—oh! that's right—we're friends, I see! Now, I must go, and look after my ward's houses. Let me see, the agent's name is—is——"

"Perkins, I think, my lord," said Mr. Winsley, thoroughly softened by the charm of Vargrave's words and manner. "Let me put on my hat, and show you his house."

"Will you?—that's very kind;—give me all the election news by the way—you know I was once within an ace of being your member."

Vargrave learned from his new friend some further particulars relative to Mrs. Butler's humble habits and homely mode of life at G * * * * *, which served completely to explain to him why his proud and worldly uncle had so carefully abstained from all intercourse with that city, and had prevented the nephew from standing for its vacant representation. It seemed, however, that Winsley—whose resentment was not of a very active or violent kind—had not communicated the discovery he had made to his fellow townspeople; but had contented himself with hints and aphorisms, whenever he had heard the subject of Mr. Templeton's marriage discussed, which had led the gossips of the place to imagine that he had made a much worse selection than he really had. As to the accuracy of Winsley's assertion, Vargrave, though surprised at first, had but little doubt on consideration, especially when he heard that Mrs. Butler's principal patroness had been the Mrs. Leslie, now the intimate friend of Lady Vargrave. But what had been the career—what the earlier condition and struggles of this simple and interesting creature?—with her appearance at C * * * * *, commenced all that surmise could invent. Not greater was the mystery that wrapped the apparition of Monco Capac by the lake Titiaca, than that which shrouded the places and the trials whence the lowly teacher of music had emerged amidst the streets of C * * * * *.

Weary, and somewhat careless, of conjecture, Lord Vargrave, in dining with Mr. Winsley, turned the conversation upon the busi

ness on which he had principally undertaken his journey—viz. the meditated purchase of Lisle Court.

"I myself am not a very good judge of landed property," said Vargrave; "I wish I knew of an experienced surveyor to look over the farms and timber; can you help me to such a one?"

Mr. Winsley smiled, and glanced at a rosy-cheeked young lady, who simpered and turned away. "I think my daughter could recommend one to your lordship, if she dared."

"Oh, pa!"

"I see. Well, Miss Winsley, I will take no recommendation but yours."

Miss Winsley made an effort.

"Indeed, my lord, I have always heard Mr. Robert Hobbs considered very clever in his profession."

"Mr. Robert Hobbs is my man! His good health—and a fair wife to him."

Miss Winsley glanced at mamma, and then at a younger sister, and then there was a titter—and then a fluttering—and then a rising—and Mr. Winsley, Lord Vargrave, and the slim secretary, were left alone.

"Really, my lord," said the host, resettling himself, and pushing the wine—"though you have guessed our little family arrangement, and I have some interest in the recommendation,—since Margaret will be Mrs. Robert Hobbs in a few weeks—yet I do not know a more acute, intelligent young man any where. Highly respectable, with an independent fortune; his father is lately dead, and made at least thirty thousand pounds in trade. His brother Edward is also dead; so he has the bulk of the property, and he follows his profession merely for amusement. He would consider it a great honor."

"And where does he live?"

"Oh, not in this county—a long way off; close to *****; but it is all in your lordship's road. A very nice house he has too. I have known his family since I was a boy; it is astonishing how his father improved the place;—it was a poor little lath-and-plaster cottage when the late Mr. Hobbs bought it, and it is now a very excellent family house."

"Well you shall give me the address and a letter of introduction, and so much for that matter. But to return to politics;" and here Lord Vargrave ran eloquently on, till Mr. Winsley thought him the only man in the world who could save the country from that utter annihilation—the possibility of which he had never even suspected before.

It may be as well to add, that, on wishing Lord Vargrave good night, Mr. Winsley whispered in his ear "Your lordship's friend, Lord Staunch, need be under no apprehension—we are all right!"

CHAPTER III.

"There is the house, sir."
—*Love's Pilgrimage*, Act iv. Sc. 2.

"Redeunt Saturnia regna."*—VIRGIL.

THE next morning, Lumley and his slender companion were rolling rapidly over the same road on which, sixteen years ago, way-worn and weary, Alice Darvil had first met with Mrs. Leslie; they were talking about a new opera-dancer as they whirled by the very spot.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, the next day, when the carriage stopped at a cast-iron gate, on which was inscribed this epigraph,—"Hobbs' Lodge—Ring the Bell."

"A snug place enough," said lord Vargrave, as they were waiting the arrival of the footman to unbar the gate.

"Yes," said Mr. Howard. "If a retired Cit could be transformed into a house, such is the house he would be."

Poor Dale Cottage! the home of Poetry and Passion! But change visits the Commonplace as well as the Romantic. Since Alice had pressed to that cold grating her wistful eyes, time had wrought its allotted revolutions—the old had died—the young grown up. Of the children playing on the lawn, death had claimed some, and marriage others; and the holyday of youth was gone for all.

The servant opened the gate. Mr. Robert Hobbs *was* at home;—he had friends with him—he was engaged, Lord Vargrave sent in his card, and the introductory letter from Mr. Winsley. In two seconds, these missives brought to the gate Mr. Robert Hobbs himself: a smart young man, with a black stock, red whiskers, and an eye-glass pendant to a

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* A former state of things returns.

hair-chain which was possibly a *gage d'amour* from Miss Margaret Winsley.

A profusion of bows, compliments, apologies, etc., the carriage drove up the sweep, and Lord Vargrave descended, and was immediately ushered into Mr. Hobbs' private room. The slim secretary followed, and sate silent, melancholy, and upright, while the peer affably explained his wants and wishes to the surveyor.

Mr. Hobbs was well acquainted with the locality of Lisle Court, which was little more than thirty miles distant; he should be proud to accompany Lord Vargrave thither the next morning. But, might he venture—might he dare—might he presume—a gentleman who lived at the town of * * * *, was to dine with him that day; a gentleman of the most profound knowledge of agricultural affairs; a gentleman who knew every farm, almost every acre, belonging to Colonel Maltravers—if his lordship could be induced to waive ceremony, and dine with Mr. Hobbs, it might be really useful to meet this gentleman. The slim secretary, who was very hungry, and who thought he sniffed an uncommonly savory smell, looked up from his boots,—Lord Vargrave smiled.

"My young friend here is too great an admirer of Mrs. Hobbs—who is to be,—not to feel anxious to make the acquaintance of any members of the family she is to enter."

Mr. George Frederick Augustus Howard blushed indignant refutation of the calumnious charge. Vargrave continued:

"As for me, I shall be delighted to meet any friends of yours, and am greatly obliged for your consideration. We may dismiss the postboys, Howard,—and what time shall we summon them?—ten o'clock?"

"If your lordship would condescend to accept a bed, we can accommodate your lordship and this gentleman, and start at any hour in the morning that ——"

"So be it," interrupted Vargrave. "You speak like a man of business. Howard, be so kind as to order the horses for six o'clock tomorrow. We'll breakfast at Lisle Court."

This matter settled, Lord Vargrave and Mr. Howard were shown into their respective apartments. Travelling dresses were changed —the dinner put back—and the fish overboiled;—but what mattered common fish, when Mr. Hobbs had just caught such a big one? Of what consequence he should be henceforth and ever! A peer—a minister—a stranger to the county,—to come all this way to consult *him!*—to be *his* guest!—to be shown off, and patted, and trotted out before all the rest of the company! Mr. Hobbs was a made man! Careless of all this,—ever at home with any one,—and delighted, perhaps, to escape a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Howard in a strange inn, —Vargrave lounged into the drawing-room, and was formally presented to the expectant family and the famishing guests.

During the expiring bachelorship of Mr Robert Hobbs, his sister, Mrs. Tiddy (to whom the reader was first introduced as a bride—gathering the wisdom of economy and large joints from the frugal lips of her mamma), officiated as lady of the house,—a comely matron, and well-preserved,—except that she had lost a front tooth,—in a jaundiced satinet gown,—with a fall of British blonde, and a tucker of the same: Mr. Tiddy being a starch man, and not willing that the luxuriant charms of Mrs. T. should be too temptingly exposed! There was also Mr. Tiddy, whom his wife had married for love, and who was now well to do; a fine-looking man, with large whiskers, and a Roman nose, a little awry. Moreover, there war a Miss Biddy or Bridget Hobbs, a young lady of four or five-and-twenty, who was considering whether she might ask Lord Vargrave to write something in her album, and who cast a bashful look of admiration at the slim secretary, as he now sauntered into the room, in a black coat, black waistcoat, black trousers, and black neckcloth, with a black pin,—looking much like an ebony cane split half-way up. Miss Biddy was a fair young lady, a *leetle* faded, with uncommonly thin arms and white satin shoes, on which the slim secretary cast his eyes and—shuddered!

In addition to the family group were the Rector of * * *, an agreeable man, who published sermons and poetry; also Sir William Jekyll, who was employing Mr. Hobbs to make a map of an estate he had just purchased; also two country squires and their two wives; moreover the physician of the neighboring town,—a remarkably tall man, who wore spectacles and told anecdotes; and, lastly, Mr. Onslow, the gentleman to whom Mr. Hobbs had referred,—an elderly man of prepossessing exterior, of high repute as the

most efficient magistrate, the best farmer, and the most sensible person in the neighborhood. This made the party, to each individual of which the great man bowed and smiled; and the great man's secretary bent, condescendingly, three joints of his back-bone.

The bell was now rung—dinner announced. Sir William Jekyll led the way with one of the she-squires, and Lord Vargrave offered his arm to the portly Mrs. Tiddy.

Vargrave, as usual, was the life of the feast. Mr. Howard, who sat next to Miss Bridget, conversed with her between the courses, "in dumb show." Mr. Onslow and the physician played second and third to Lord Vargrave. When the dinner was over, and the ladies had retired, Vargrave found himself seated next to Mr. Onslow, and discovered in his neighbor a most agreeable companion. They talked principally about Lisle Court, and from Colonel Maltravers, the conversation turned naturally upon Ernest. Vargrave proclaimed his early intimacy with the latter gentleman,—complained, feelingly, that politics had divided them of late,—and told two or three anecdotes of their youthful adventures in the East. Mr. Onslow listened to him with much attention.

"I made the acquaintance of Mr. Maltravers many years ago," said he, "and upon a very delicate occasion. I was greatly interested in him,—I never saw one so young (for he was then but a boy) manifest feelings so deep. By the dates you have referred to, your acquaintance with him must have commenced very shortly after mine. Was he, at that time, cheerful—in good spirits?"

"No, indeed—hypochondriacal to the greatest degree."

"Your lordship's intimacy with him and the confidence that generally exists between young men, induce me to suppose that he may have told you a little romance connected with his early years."

Lumley paused to consider; and this conversation, which had been carried on apart, was suddenly broken into by the tall doctor, who wanted to know whether his lordship had ever heard the anecdote about Lord Thurlow and the late King. The anecdote was as long as the doctor himself; and when it was over, the gentleman adjourned to the drawing-room, and all conversation was immediately drowned by "Row, brothers, row," which had only been suspended till the arrival of Mr. Tiddy, who had a fine bass voice.

Alas! eighteen years ago, in that spot of earth, Alice Darvil had first caught the soul of music from the lips of Genius and of Love! But better as it is—less romantic, but more proper—as Hobbs' Lodge was less pretty, but more safe from the winds and rains, than Dale Cottage.

Miss Bridget ventured to ask the good-humored Lord Vargrave if he sang? "Not I, Miss Hobbs—but Howard, there—Ah, if you heard *him!*" The consequence of this hint was, that the unhappy secretary, who alone, in a distant corner, was unconsciously refreshing his fancy with some cool weak coffee, was instantly beset with applications from Miss Bridget, Mrs. Tiddy, Mr. Tiddy and the tall doctor, to favor the company with a specimen of his talents. Mr. Howard could sing—he could even play the guitar. But to sing at Hobbs' Lodge—to sing to the acccompaniment of Mrs. Tiddy—to have his gentle tenor crushed to death in a glee by the heavy splay-foot of Mr. Tiddy's manly bass—the thought was insufferable! He faltered forth assurances of his ignorance, and hastened to bury his resentment in the retirement of a remote sofa. Vargrave, who had forgotten the significant question of Mr. Onslow, renewed in a whisper his conversation with that gentleman relative to the meditated investment, while Mr. and Mrs. Tiddy sang, "Come dwell with me;" and Onslow was so pleased with his new acquaintance, that he volunteered to make a fourth in Lumley's carriage the next morning, and accompany him to Lisle Court. This settled, the party soon afterwards broke up. At midnight Lord Vargrave was fast asleep; and Mr. Howard, tossing restlessly to and fro on his melancholy couch, was revolving all the hardships that await a native of St. James's, who ventures forth among

> "The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders!"

CHAPTER IV.

"But how were these doubts to be changed into absolute certainty."—EDGAR HUNTLEY.

THE next morning, while it was yet dark,

Lord Vargrave's carriage picked up Mr. Onslow at the door of a large old-fashioned house, at the entrance of the manufacturing town of * * * *. The party were silent and sleepy, till they arrived at Lisle Court,—the sun had then appeared—the morning was clear—the air frosty and bracing. And as, after traversing a noble park, a superb quadrangular pile of brick, flanked by huge square turrets, coped with stone, broke upon the gaze of Lord Vargrave, his worldly heart swelled within him, and the image of Evelyn became inexpressibly lovely and seductive.

Though the housekeeper was not prepared for Vargrave's arrival at so early an hour, yet he had been daily expected: the logs soon burnt bright in the ample hearth of the breakfast-room—the urn hissed—the cutlets smoked—and while the rest of the party gathered round the fire, and unmuffled themselves of cloaks and shawl-handkerchiefs, Vargrave seizing upon the housekeeper traversed with delighted steps the magnificent suite of rooms—gazed on the pictures—admired the state bed-chambers—peeped into the offices—and recognized in all a mansion worthy of a Peer of England; but which a more prudent man would have thought, with a sigh, required careful management of the rent-roll raised from the property adequately to equip and maintain. Such an idea did not cross the mind of Vargrave; he only thought how much he should be honored and envied, when, as Secretary of State, he should yearly fill those feudal chambers with the pride and rank of England! It was characteristic of the extraordinary sanguineness and self-confidence of Vargrave, that he entirely overlooked one slight obstacle to this prospect, in the determined refusal of Evelyn to accept that passionate homage which he offered to—her fortune!

When breakfast was over the steward was called in, and the party, mounted upon ponies, set out to reconnoitre. After spending the short day most agreeably in looking over the gardens, pleasure grounds, park, and home-farm, and settling to visit the more distant parts of the property the next day, the party were returning home to dine, when Vargrave's eye caught the glittering *whim* of Sir Gregory Gubbins.

He pointed it out to Mr. Onslow and laughed much at hearing of the annoyance it occasioned to Colonel Maltravers. "Thus," said Lumley, "do we all crumple the rose-leaf under us, and quarrel with couches the most luxuriant! As for me, I will wager, that were this property mine, or my wards, in three weeks we should have won the heart of Sir Gregory, made him pull down his *whim*, and coaxed him out of his interest in the city of * * * *. A good seat for you, some day or other."

"Sir Gregory has prodigiously bad taste," said Mr. Hobbs. "For my part, I think that there ought to be a certain modest simplicity in the display of wealth got in business;—that was my poor father's maxim."

"Ah!" said Vargrave, "Hobbs' Lodge is a specimen. Who was your predecessor in that charming retreat?"

"Why the place—then called Dale Cottage—belonged to a Mr. Berners, a rich bachelor in business, who was rich enough not to mind what people said of him, and kept a lady there. She ran off from him, and he then let it to some young man—a stranger—very eccentric, I hear—a Mr.—Mr. Butler—and he, too, gave the cottage an unlawful attraction—a most beautiful girl, I have heard."

"Butler!" echoed Vargrave—"Butler—Butler!"—Lumley recollected that such had been the real name of Mrs. Cameron.

Onslow looked hard at Vargrave.

"You recognize the name, my lord," said he in a whisper as Hobbs had turned to address himself to Mr. Howard. "I thought you very discreet when I asked you, last night, if you remembered the early follies of your friend." A suspicion at once flashed upon the quick mind of Vargrave:—Butler was a name on the mother's side in the family of Maltravers; the gloom of Ernest when he first knew him—the boy's hints that the gloom was connected with the affections—the extraordinary and single accomplishment of Lady Vargrave in that art of which Maltravers was so consummate a master—the similarity of name—all taken in conjunction with the meaning question of Mr. Onslow, were enough to suggest to Vargrave that he might be on the verge of a family secret, the knowledge of which could be turned to advantage. He took care not to confess his ignorance, but artfully proceeded to draw out Mr. Onslow's communications.

"Why, it is true," said he, "that Maltrav-

ers and I had no secrets. Ah! we were wild fellows then—the name of Butler is in his family—eh?"

"It is. I see you know all."

"Yes; he told me the story, but it is eighteen years ago. Do refresh my memory.—Howard, my good fellow, just ride on and expedite dinner: Mr. Hobbs, will you go with Mr. What's-his-name, the steward, and look over the maps, outgoings, etc.? Now, Mr. Onslow—so Maltravers took the cottage, and a lady with it?—ay, I remember."

Mr. Onslow (who was in fact that magistrate to whom Ernest had confided his name and committed the search after Alice, and who was really anxious to know if any tidings of the poor girl had ever been ascertained) here related that history with which the reader is acquainted;—the robbery of the cottage—the disappearance of Alice—the suspicions that connected that disappearance with her ruffian father—the despair and search of Maltravers. He added that Ernest, both before his departure from England, and on his return, had written to him to learn if Alice had ever been heard of;—the replies of the magistrate were unsatisfactory. "And do you think, my lord, that Mr. Maltravers has never to this day ascertained what became of the poor young woman?"

"Why, let me see,—what was her name?"

The magistrate thought a moment, and replied, "Alice Darvil."

"Alice!" exclaimed Vargrave, "Alice!"—aware that such was the Christian name of his uncle's wife, and now almost convinced of the truth of his first vague suspicion.

"You seem to know the name."

"Of Alice; yes—but not Darvil. No, no; I believe he has never heard of the girl to this hour. Nor you either?"

"I have not. One little circumstance related to me by Mr. Hobbs, your surveyor's father, gave me some uneasiness. About two years after the young woman disappeared, a girl, of very humble dress and appearance, stopped at the gate of Hobbs' Lodge, and asked earnestly for Mr. Butler. On hearing he was gone, she turned away, and was seen no more. It seems that this girl had an infant in her arms—which rather shocked the propriety of Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs. The old gentleman told me the circumstance a few days after it happened, and I caused inquiry to be made for the stranger; but she could not be discovered. I thought at first this possibly might be the lost Alice; but I learned that, during his stay at the cottage, your friend—despite his error, which we will not stop to excuse,—had exercised so generous and wide a charity amongst the poor in the town and neighborhood, that it was a more probable supposition of the two, that the girl belonged to some family he had formerly relieved, and her visit was that of a mendicant, not a mistress. Accordingly, after much consideration, I resolved not to mention the circumstance to Mr. Maltravers, when he wrote to me on his return from the Continent. A considerable time had then elapsed since the girl had applied to Mr. Hobbs;—all trace of her was lost—the incident might open wounds that time must have nearly healed—might give false hopes—or, what was worse, occasion a fresh and unfounded remorse at the idea of Alice's destitution; it would, in fact, do no good, and might occasion much unnecessary pain. I therefore suppressed all mention of it."

"You did right: and so the poor girl had an infant in her arms?—humph! What sort of looking person was this Alice Darvil?—pretty, of course?"

"I never saw her; and none but the persons employed in the premises knew her by sight—they described her as remarkably lovely."

"Fair and slight,—with blue eyes, I suppose?—those are the orthodox requisites of a heroine."

"Upon my word I forget;—indeed I should never have remembered as much as I do, if the celebrity of Mr. Maltravers, and the consequence of his family in these parts, together with the sight of his own agony—the most painful I ever witnessed—had not served to impress the whole affair very deeply on my mind."

"Was the girl who appeared at the gate of Hobbs' Lodge described to you?"

"No;—they scarcely observed her countenance, except that her complexion was too fair for a gipsy's;—yet, now I think of it, Mrs. Tiddy, who was with her father when he told me the adventure, dwelt particularly on her having (as you so pleasantly conjecture) fair hair and blue eyes. Mrs. Tiddy, being just married, was romantic at that day."

"Well, it is an odd tale.—But life is full of odd tales. Here we are at the house—it really is a splendid old place!"

CHAPTER V.

"Pendent opera interrupta." *—VIRGIL.

THE history Vargrave had heard, he revolved much when he retired to rest. He could not but allow that there was still little ground for more than conjecture, that Alice Darvil and Alice Lady Vargrave were one and the same person. It might, however, be of great importance to him, to trace this conjecture to certainty. The knowledge of a secret of early sin and degradation in one so pure, so spotless, as Lady Vargrave, might be of immense service in giving him a power over her, which he could turn to account with Evelyn. How could he best prosecute further inquiry?—by repairing at once to Brook Green—or—the thought struck him—by visiting and "pumping" Mrs. Leslie, the patroness of Mrs. Butler of C * * * *, the friend of Lady Vargrave? It was worth trying the latter—it was little out of his way back to London. Hie success in picking the brains of Mr. Onslow of a secret, encouraged him in the hope of equal success with Mrs. Leslie. He decided accordingly, and fell asleep to dream of Christmas *battues*, royal visitors, the cabinet, the premiership!—Well, no possession equals the dreams of it!—Sleep on, my lord!—you would be restless enough if you were to get all you want.

For the next three days, Lord Vargrave was employed in examining the general outlines of the estate, and the result of this survey satisfied him as to the expediency of the purchase. On the third day, he was several miles from the house when a heavy rain came on. Lord Vargrave was constitutionally hardy, and, not having been much exposed to the visitations of the weather of late years, was not practically aware that, when a man is past forty, he cannot endure with impunity all that falls innocuously on the elasticity of twenty-six. He did not, therefore, heed the rain that drenched him to the skin, and neglected to change his dress till he had finished reading some letters and newspapers which awaited his return at Lisle Court. The consequence of this imprudence was, that, the next morning when he woke, Lord Vargrave found himself, for almost the first time in his life, seriously ill. His head ached violently—cold shiverings shook his frame like an ague; the very strength of the constitution on which the fever had begun to fasten itself, augmented its danger. Lumley—the last man in the world to think of the possibility of dying—fought up against his own sensations—ordered his post-horses, as his visit of survey was now over, and scarcely even alluded to his indisposition. About an hour before he set off, his letters arrived; one of these informed him that Caroline, accompanied by Evelyn, had already arrived in Paris; the other was from Colonel Legard, respectfully resigning his office, on the ground of an acession of fortune by the sudden death of the admiral, and his intention to spend the ensuing year in a continental excursion.

This last letter occasioned Vargrave considerable alarm; he had always felt a deep jealousy of the handsome ex-guardsman, and he at once suspected that Legard was about to repair to Paris as his rival. He sighed, and looked round the spacious apartment, and gazed on the wide prospects of grove and turf that extended from the window, and said to himself—"Is another to snatch these from my grasp?" His impatience to visit Mrs. Leslie—to gain ascendancy over Lady Vargrave—to repair to Paris—to scheme—to manœuvre—to triumph—accelerated the progress of the disease that was now burning in his veins; and the hand that he held out to Mr. Hobbs, as he stepped into his carriage, almost scorched the cold, plump, moist fingers of the surveyor. Before six o'clock in the evening, Lord Vargrave confessed reluctantly to himself, that he was too ill to proceed much further "Howard," said he then, breaking a silence that had lasted some hours, "don't be alarmed—I feel that I am about to have a severe attack;—I shall stop at M——, (naming a large town they were approaching)—I shall send for the best physician the place affords; if I am delirious to morrow, or unable to give my own orders, have the kindness to send express for Dr. Holland—but don't leave me yourself, my good fellow. At my age, it is a hard

* The things begun are interrupted and suspended.

thing to have no one in the world to care for me in illness: d——n affection when I am well!"

After this strange burst, which very much frightened Mr. Howard, Lumley relapsed into silence, not broken till he reached M——.

The best physician was sent for; and the next morning, as he had half-foreseen and foretold; Lord Vargrave *was* delirious!

CHAPTER VI.

"Nought under Heaven so strongly doth allure
The sense of man, and all his mind possess,
As Beauty's love-bait."—SPENSER.

LEGARD was, as I have before intimated, a young man of generons and excellent dispositions, though somewhat spoiled by the tenor of his education, and the gay and reckless society which had administered tonics to his vanity and opiates to his intellect. The effect which the beauty, the grace, the innocence of Evelyn, had produced upon him had been most deep and most salutary. It had rendered disspation tasteless and insipid—it had made him look more deeply into his own heart, and into the rules of life. Though, partly from the irksomeness of dependence upon an uncle at once generous and ungracious, partly from a diffident and feeling sense of his own inadequate pretensions to the hand of Miss Cameron, and partly from the prior and acknowledged claims of Lord Vargrave—he had accepted, half in despair, the appointment offered to him, he still found it impossible to banish that image which had been the first to engrave upon ardent and fresh affections an indelible impression. He secretly chafed at the thought that it was to a fortunate rival that he owed the independence and the station he had acquired, and resolved to seize an early opportunity to free himself from obligations that he deeply regretted he had incurred. At length, he learned that Lord Vargrave had been refused—that Evelyn was free; and, within a few days from that intelligence, the admiral was seized with apoplexy—and Legard suddenly found himself possessed, if not of wealth, at least of a competence sufficient to redeem his character as a suitor from the suspicion attached to a fortune-hunter and adventurer. Despite the new prospects opened to him by the death of his uncle, and despite the surly caprice which had mingled with and alloyed the old admiral's kindness, Legard was greatly shocked by his death; and his grateful and gentle nature was at first only sensible to grief for the loss he had sustained. But when, at last, recovering from his sorrow, he saw Evelyn disengaged and free, and himself in a position honorably to contest her hand, he could not resist the sweet and passionate hopes that broke upon him. He resigned, as we have seen, his official appointment, and set out for Paris. He reached that city a day or two after the arrival of Lord and Lady Doltimore. He found the former, who had not forgotten the cautions of Vargrave, at first cold and distant; but partly from the indolent habit of submitting to Legard's dictates on matters of taste, partly from a liking to his society, and principally from the popular suffrages of fashion, which had always been accorded to Legard, and which were noways diminished by the news of his accession of fortune—Lord Doltimore, weak and vain, speedily yielded to the influences of his old associate, and Legard became quietly installed as the *enfant de la maison*. Caroline was not in this instance a very faithful ally to Vargrave's views and policy. In his singular *liaison* with Lady Doltimore, the crafty manœuvrer had committed the vulgar fault of intriguers; he had over-refined, and had over-reached himself. At the commencement of their strange and unprincipled intimacy, Vargrave had had, perhaps, no other thought than that of piquing Evelyn, consoling his vanity, amusing his *ennui*, and indulging rather his propensities as a gallant, than promoting his more serious objects as a man of the world. By degrees, and especially at Knaresdean, Vargrave himself became deeply entangled, by an affair that he had never before contemplated as more important than a passing diversion:—instead of securing a friend to assist him in his designs on Evelyn, he suddenly found that he had obtained a mistress anxious for his love, and jealous of his homage. With his usual promptitude and self-confidence, he was led at once to deliver himself of all the ill consequences of his rashness—to get rid of Caroline as a mistress—and to retain her as a tool, by marrying her to Lord Doltimore. By the great ascendancy which his character ac-

quired over her, and by her own worldly ambition, he succeeded in inducing her to sacrifice all romance to an union that gave her rank and fortune; and Vargrave then rested satisfied, that the clever wife would not only secure him a permanent power over the political influence and private fortune of the weak husband, but also abet his designs in securing at alliance equally desirable for himself. Here it was that Vargrave's incapacity to understand the refinements and scruples of a woman's affection and nature, however guilty the one, and however worldly the other, foiled and deceived him. Caroline, though the wife of another, could not contemplate, without anguish, a similar bondage for her lover; and, having something of the better qualities of her sex still left to her, she recoiled from being an accomplice in arts that were to drive the young, inexperienced, and guileless creature who called her "friend" into the arms of a man who openly avowed the most mercenary motives, and who took gods and men to witness that his heart was sacred to another. Only in Vargrave's presence were those scruples overmastered; but the moment he was gone they returned in full force: she had yielded, from positive fear, to his commands that she should convey Evelyn to Paris; but she trembled to think of the vague hints and dark menaces that Vargrave had let fall as to ulterior proceedings, and was distracted at the thought of being implicated in some villanous or rash design. When, therefore, the man whose rivalry Vargrave most feared was almost established at her house, she made but a feeble resistance: she thought that, if Legard should become a welcome and accepted suitor before Lumley arrived, the latter would be forced to forego whatever hopes he yet cherished, and that she should be delivered from a dilemma, the prospect of which daunted and appalled her. Added to this, Caroline was now, alas! sensible that a fool is not so easily governed—her resistance to an intimacy with Legard would have been of little avail: Doltimore, in these matters, had an obstinate will of his own; and, whatever might once have been Caroline's influence over her liege, certain it is, that such influence had been greatly impaired of late by the indulgence of a temper, always irritable, and now daily more soured by regret, remorse, contempt for her husband, and the melancholy discovery that fortune, youth, beauty, and station, are no talismans against misery.

It was the gayest season of Paris; and, to escape from herself, Caroline plunged eagerly into the vortex of its dissipations. If Doltimore's heart was dissapointed, his vanity was pleased at the admiration Caroline excited; and he himself was of an age and temper to share in the pursuits and amusements of his wife. Into these gaieties, new to their fascination, dazzled by their splendor, the young Evelyn entered, with her hostess; and ever by her side was the unequalled form of Legard. Each of them in the bloom of youth, each of them at once formed to please, and to be pleased by, that fair Armida which we call the World, there was necessarily, a certain congeniality in their views and sentiments, their occupations and their objects; nor was there, in all that brilliant city, one more calculated to captivate the eye and fancy than George Legard. But still, to a certain degree, diffident and fearful, Legard never yet spoke of love; nor did their intimacy at this time ripen to that point in which Evelyn could have asked herself if there were danger in the society of Legard, or serious meaning in his obvious admiration. Whether that melancholy, to which Lady Vargrave had alluded in her correspondence with Lumley, were occasioned by thoughts connected with Maltravers, or unacknowledged recollections of Legard, it remains for the acute reader himself to ascertain.

The Doltimores had been about three weeks in Paris; and, for a fortnight of that time, Legard had been their constant guest, and half the inmate of their hotel; when, on that night which has been commemorated in our last book, Maltravers suddenly once more beheld the face of Evelyn, and in the same hour learned that she was free; he quitted Valerie's box: with a burning pulse and a beating heart, joy and surprise, and hope, sparkling in his eyes, and brightening his whole aspect, he hastened to Evelyn's side.

It was at this time Legard, who sat behind Miss Cameron, unconscious of the approach of a rival, happened, by one of those chances which occur in conversation, to mention the name of Maltravers. He asked Evelyn if she had yet met him?

"What! is he then in Paris?" asked Evelyn quickly. "I heard, indeed," she continued,

"that he left Burleigh for Paris, but imagined he had gone on to Italy."

"No, he is still here; but he goes, I believe, little into the society Lady Doltimore chiefly visits. Is he one of your favorites, Miss Cameron?"

There was a slight increase of color in Evelyn's beautiful cheek, as she answered—

"Is it possible not to admire and be interested in one so gifted?"

"He has certainly noble and fine qualities," returned Legard; "but I cannot feel at ease with him; a coldness—a *hauteur*—a measured distance of manner—seem to forbid even esteem. Yet *I* ought not to say so," he added, with a pang of self-reproach.

"No, indeed, you ought not to say so," said Evelyn, shaking her head with a pretty affectation of anger; "for I know that you pretend to like what I like, and admire what I admire; and I am an enthusiast in all that relates to Mr. Maltravers!"

"I know that I would wish to see all things in life through Miss Cameron's eyes," whispered Legard, softly; and this was the most meaning speech he had ever yet made.

Evelyn turned away, and seemed absorbed in the opera; and at that instant the door of the box opened, and Maltravers entered.

In her open, undisguised, youthful delight, at seeing him again, Maltravers felt indeed "as if Paradise were opened in her face." In his own agitated emotions, he scarcely noticed that Legard had risen and resigned his seat to him: he availed himself of the civility, greeted his old acquaintance with a smile and bow, and in a few minutes he was in deep converse with Evelyn.

Never had he so successfully exerted the singular, the master-fascination that he could command at will—the more powerful, from its contrast to his ordinary coldness: in the very expression of his eyes—the very tone of his voice—there was that, in Maltravers, seen at his happier moments, which irresistibly interested and absorbed your attention: he could make you forget everything but himself, and the rich, easy, yet earnest eloquence, which gave color to his language and melody to his voice. In that hour of renewed intercourse with one who had at first awakened, if not her heart, at least her imagination and her deeper thoughts, certain it is that even Legard was not missed. As she smiled and listened, Evelyn dreamt not of the anguish she inflicted. Leaning against the back of the box, Legard surveyed the absorbed attention of Evelyn, the adoring eyes of Maltravers, with that utter and crushing wretchedness which no passion but jealousy, and that only while it is yet a virgin agony, can bestow! He had never before even dreamt of rivalry in such a quarter; but there was that ineffable instinct, which lovers have, and which so seldom errs, that told him at once that in Maltravers was the greatest obstacle and peril his passion could encounter. He waited in hopes that Evelyn would take the occasion to turn to him at least—when the fourth act closed. She did not; and, unable to constrain his emotions, and reply to the small-talk of Lord Doltimore, he abruptly quitted the box.

When the opera was over, Maltravers offered his arm to Evelyn; she accepted it, and then she looked round for Legard. He was gone.

BOOK EIGHTH.

Ω Ζεῦ, τί μου δρᾶσαι βεβούλευσαι πέρι;

O Fate! O Heaven!—what have ye then decreed?—SOPH. *Œd. Tyr.* 724.

Ὕβρις, * * *
* * * *
ακροτάταν εἰσαναβασ' ἀπότομον
ὤρουσέν νιν εἰς ἀνάγκαν.—*Ibid.* 874.

Insolent pride * *
* * * *
The topmost crag of the great precipice
Surmounts—to rush to ruin.

CHAPTER I.

* * * "She is young, wise, fair,
In these to Nature she's immediate heir.
* * * * *
* * * "Honors best thrive,
When rather from our acts we them derive
Than our foregoers!"—*All's Well That Ends Well.*

Letter from Ernest Maltravers to the Hon. Frederick Cleveland.

"EVELYN is free—she is in Paris—I have seen her—I see her daily.

"How true it is that we cannot make a philosophy of indifference! The affections are stronger than all our reasonings. We must take them into our alliance, or they will destroy all our theories of self-government. Such fools of fate are we, passing from system to system—from scheme to scheme—vainly seeking to shut out passion and sorrow—forgetting that they are born within us—and return to the soul as the seasons to the earth! Yet,—years, many years ago—when I first looked gravely into my own nature and being here—when I first awakened to the dignity and solemn resposibilities of human life—I had resolved to curb and tame myself into a thing of rule and measure. Bearing within me the wound scarred over but never healed—the consciousness of wrong to the heart that had leaned upon me—haunted by the mournful memory of my lost Alice—I shuddered at new affections bequeathing new griefs. Wrapped in a haughty egotism, I wished not to extend my empire over a wider circuit than my own intellect and passions. I turned from the trader-covetousness of bliss, that would freight the wealth of life upon barks exposed to every wind upon the seas of Fate—I was contented with the hope to pass life alone, honored, though unloved. Slowly and reluctantly I yielded to the fascinations of Florence Lascelles. The hour that sealed the compact between us was one of regret and alarm. In vain I sought to deceive myself—I felt that I did not love. And then I imagined that Love was no longer in my nature—that I had exhausted its treasures before my time, and left my heart a bankrupt. Not till the last—not till that glorious soul broke out in all its brightness, the nearer it approached the source to which it has returned—did I feel of what tenderness she was worthy and I was capable. She died, and the world was darkened! Energy—ambition—my former aims and objects—were all sacrificed at her tomb. But amidst ruins and through the darkness, my soul yet supported me; I could no longer hope, but I could endure. I was resolved that I would not be subdued, and that the world should not hear me groan. Amidst strange and far-distant scenes—amidst hordes to whom my very language was unknown—in wastes and forests which the step of civilized man, with his sorrows and his dreams, had never trodden—I wrestled with my soul, as the patriarch of old wrestled with the angel—and the angel was at last the victor! You do not mistake me—you know that it was not the death of Florence alone that worked in me that awful revolution, but with that death the last glory fled from the face of things, that had seemed to me beautiful of old. Hers was a love that accompanied and dignified the schemes and aspirations of manhood—a love that was an incarnation of ambition itself; and all the evils and disappointments that belong to ambition seemed to crowd around my heart like vultures to a feast, allured and invited by the dead. But this at length was over; the barbarous state restored me to the civilized. I returned to my equals, prepared no more to be an actor in the strife, but a calm spectator of the turbulent arena. I once more laid my head beneath the roof of my fathers; and, if without any clear and definite object, I at least hoped to find amidst 'my old hereditary trees' the charm of contemplation and repose. And scarce—in the first hours of my arrival—had I indulged that dream, when a fair face, a sweet voice, that had once before left deep and unobliterated impressions on my heart, scattered all my philosophy to the winds. I saw Evelyn! and if ever there was love at first sight, it was that which I felt for her: I lived in her presence, and forgot the Future! Or, rather, I was with the Past—in the bowers of my spring-tide of life and hope! It was an after-birth of youth—my love for that young heart!

"It is, indeed, only in maturity that we know how lovely were our earliest years! What depth of wisdom in the old Greek myth, that allotted Hebe as the prize to the God who had been the Arch-Laborer of life! and whom the satiety of all that results from experience, had made enamoured of all that belongs to the Hopeful and the New!

"This enchanting child—this delightful Evelyn—this ray of undreamt-of sunshine—smiled away all my palaces of ice! I loved, Cleveland—I loved more ardently, more passionately, more wildly than ever I did of old! But suddenly I learned that she was affianced to another, and felt it was not for me to question, to seek the annulment of, the bond. I had been unworthy to love Evelyn, if I had not loved Honor more!

I fled from her presence, honestly and resolutely; I sought to conquer a forbidden passion; I believed that I had not won affection in return; I believed, from certain expressions that I everheard Evelyn utter to another, that her heart as well as her hand, was given to Vargrave. I came hither; you know how sternly and resolutely I strove to eradicate a weakness that seemed without even the justification of hope! If I suffered, I betrayed it not. Suddenly Evelyn appeared again before me!—and suddenly I learned that she was free! Oh, the rapture of that moment! Could you have seen her bright face, her enchanting smile, when we met again! Her ingenuous innocence did not conceal her gladness at seeing me! What hopes broke upon me! Despite the difference of our years, I think she loves me! that in that love I am about at last to learn what blessings there are in life!

"Evelyn has the simplicity, the tenderness, of Alice, with the refinement and culture of Florence herself; not the genius—not the daring spirit—not the almost fearful brilliancy of that ill-fated being—but with a taste as true to the Beautiful, with a soul as sensitive to the Sublime! In Evelyn's presence I feel a sense of peace, of security, of home! Happy! thrice happy! he who will take her to his breast! Of late she has assumed a new charm in my eyes—a certain pensiveness and abstraction have succeeded to her wonted gaiety. Ah! Love is pensive; is it not, Cleveland? How often I ask myself that question! And yet, amidst all my hopes, there are hours when I tremble and despond! How can that innocent and joyous spirit sympathize with all that mine has endured and known? How, even though her imagination be dazzled by some prestige around my name, how can I believe that I have awakened her heart to that deep and real love of which it is capable, and which youth excites in youth? When we meet at her home, or amidst the quiet yet brilliant society which is gathered round Madame de Ventadour or the De Montaignes, with whom she is an especial favorite—when we converse—when I sit by her, and her soft eyes meet mine—I feel not the disparity of years; my heart speaks to her, and *that* is youthful still! But in the more gay and crowded haunts to which her presence allures me, when I see that fairy form surrounded by those who have not outlived the pleasures that so naturally dazzle and captivate her—then, indeed, I feel that my tastes, my habits, my pursuits, belong to another season of life, and ask myself anxiously, if my nature and my years are those that can make *her* happy? Then, indeed, I recognize the wide interval that time and trial place between one whom the world has wearied, and one for whom the world is new. If she should discover hereafter that youth should love only youth, my bitterest anguish would be that of remorse! I know how deeply I love, by knowing how immeasurably dearer her happiness is than my own! I will wait, then, yet awhile—I will examine—I will watch well that I do not deceive myself. As yet, I think that I have no rivals whom I need fear: surrounded as she is by the youngest and the gayest, she still turns with evident pleasure to me, whom she calls her friend. She will forego even the amusements she most loves, for society in which we can converse more at ease. You remember, for instance, young Legard?—he is here; and before I met Evelyn, was much at Lady Doltimore's house. I cannot be blind to his superior advantages of youth and person; and there is something striking and prepossessing in the gentle yet manly frankness of his manner;—and yet no fear of his rivalship ever haunts me. True, that of late he has been little in Evelyn's society; nor do I think, in the frivolity of his pursuits, he can have educated his mind to appreciate Evelyn, or be possessed of those qualities which would render him worthy of her. But there is something good in the young man, despite his foibles—something that wins upon me; and you will smile to learn, that he has even surprised from *me*—usually so reserved on such matters—the confession of my attachment and hopes! Evelyn often talks to me of her mother, and describes her in colors so glowing, that I feel the greatest interest in one who has helped to form so beautiful and pure a mind. Can you learn who Lady Vargrave was?—there is evidently some mystery thrown over her birth and connections; and, from what I can hear, this arises from their lowliness. You know that, though I have been accused of family pride, it is a pride of a peculiar sort. I am proud, not of the length of a mouldering pedigree, but of some historical quarterings in my escutcheon—of some blood of scholars and of heroes that rolls in my veins; it is the same kind of pride that an Englishman may feel in belonging to a country that has produced Shakespeare and Bacon. I have never, I hope, felt the vulgar pride that disdains want of birth in others; and I care not three straws whether my friend or my wife be descended from a king or a peasant. It is myself, and not my connections, who alone can disgrace my lineage; therefore, however humble Lady Vargrave's parentage, do not scruple to inform me, should you learn any intelligence that bears upon it.

"I had a conversation last night with Evelyn, that delighted me. By some accident we spoke of Lord Vargrave; and she told me, with an enchanting candor, of the position in which she stood with him, and the conscientious and noble scruples she felt as to the enjoyment of a fortune, which her benefactor and step-father had evidently intended to be shared with his nearest relative. In these scruples I cordially concurred; and if I marry Evelyn, my first care will be to carry them into effect—by securing to Vargrave, as far as the law may permit, the larger part of the income—I should like to say all—at least till Evelyn's children would have the right to claim it: a right not to be enforced during her own, and, therefore, probably not during Vargrave's life. I own that this would be no sacrifice, for I am proud enough to recoil from the thought of being indebted for fortune to the woman I love. It was that kind of pride which gave coldness and constraint to my regard for Florence: and for the rest, my own property (much increased by the simplicity of my habits of life for the last few years) will suffice for all Evelyn or myself could require. Ah! madman, that I am!—I calculate already on marriage, even while I have so much cause for anxiety as to love. But my heart beats—my heart has grown a dial, that keeps the account of time; by its movements I calculate the moments—in an hour I shall see her!

"Oh!—never!—never! in my wildest and earliest visions, could I have fancied that I should love as I love now! Adieu, my oldest and kindest friend! If I am happy at last, it will be something to feel that at last I shall have satisfied your expectations of my youth.

"Affectionately yours,

"E. MALTRAVERS."

"*Rue de* ——, *Paris*,
January —, 18—."

CHAPTER II.

* * * "In her youth
There is a prone and speechless dialect—
Such as moves men."—*Measure for Measure.*

"*Abbess.* Haply in private—
Adriana. And in assemblies too."
—*Comedy of Errors.*

It was true, as Maltravers had stated, that Legard had of late been little at Lady Doltimore's, or in the same society as Evelyn. With the vehemence of an ardent and passionate nature, he yielded to the jealous rage and grief that devoured him. He saw too clearly, and from the first, that Maltravers adored Evelyn; and, in her familiar kindness of manner towards him, in the unlimited veneration in which she appeared to hold his gifts and qualities, he though that that love might become reciprocal. He became gloomy and almost morose;—he shunned Evelyn—he forbore to enter into the lists against his rival. Perhaps the intellectual superiority of Maltravers—the extraordinary conversational brilliancy that he could display when he pleased—the commanding dignity of his manners—even the matured authority of his reputation and years, might have served to awe the hopes, as well as to wound the vanity, of a man accustomed himself to be the oracle of a circle. These might have strongly influenced Legard in withdrawing himself from Evelyn's society; but there was one circumstance, connected with motives much more generous, that mainly determined his conduct. It happened that Maltravers, shortly after his first interview with Evelyn, was riding alone one day, in the more sequestered part of the *Bois de Boulogne*, when he encountered Legard, also alone, and on horseback. The latter, on succeeding to his uncle's fortune, had taken care to repay his debt to Maltravers; he had done so in a short, but feeling and grateful letter, which had been forwarded to Maltravers at Paris, and which pleased and touched him. Since that time he had taken a liking to the young man, and now, meeting him at Paris, he sought, to a certain extent, Legard's more intimate acquaintance. Maltravers was in the happy mood, when we are inclined to be friends with all men. It is true, however, that though unknown to himself, that pride of bearing, which often gave to the very virtues of Maltravers an unamiable aspect occasionally irritated one who felt he had incurred to him an obligation of honor and of life, never to be effaced; it made the sense of this obligation more intolerable to Legard; it made him more desirous to acquit himself of the charge. But, on this day, there was so much cordiality in the greeting of Maltravers, and he pressed Legard in so friendly a manner to join him in his ride, that the young man's heart was softened, and they rode together, conversing familiarly on such topics as were in common between them. At last the conversation fell on Lord and Lady Doltimore; and thence Maltravers, who soul was full of one thought, turned it indirectly towards Evelyn.

"Did you ever see Lady Vargrave?"

"Never," replied Legard, looking another way; "but Lady Doltimore says she is as beautiful as Evelyn herself, if that be possible; and still so young in form and countenance, that she looks rather like her sister than her mother!"

"How I should like to know her!" said Maltravers, with a sudden energy.

Legard changed the subject. He spoke of the Carnival—of balls—of masquerades—of operas—of reigning beauties!

"Ah!" said Maltravers, with a half sigh, "yours is the age for those dazzling pleasures; to me they are 'the twice-told tale."

Maltravers meant it not, but this remark chafed Legard. He thought it conveyed a sarcasm on the childishness of his own mind, or the levity of his pursuits; his color mounted, as he replied,

"'It is not, I fear, the slight difference of years between us, it is the difference of intellect you would insinuate; but you should remember all men have not your resources; all men cannot pretend to genius!"

"My dear Legard," said Maltravers, kindly, "do not fancy that I could have designed any insinuation half so presumptuous and impertinent. Believe me, I envy you, sincerely and sadly, all those faculties of enjoyment which I have worn away. Oh, how I envy you! for, were they still mine, then—then, indeed, I might hope to mould myself into greater congeniality with the beautiful and the young!"

Maltravers paused a moment, and resumed with a grave smile: "I trust Legard, that you will be wiser than I have been; that you will

gather your roses while it is yet May: and that you will not live to thirty-six, pining for happiness and home, a disappointed and desolate man; till, when your ideal is at last found, you shrink back appalled, to discover that you have lost none of the tendencies to love, but many of the graces by which love is to be allured!"

There was so much serious and earnest feeling in these words, that they went home at once to Legard's sympathies. He felt irresistibly impelled to learn the worst.

"Maltravers!" said he, in a hurried tone, "it would be an idle compliment to say that you are not likely to love in vain: perhaps it is indelicate in me to apply a general remark; and yet—yet I cannot but fancy that I have discovered your secret, and that you are not insensible to the charms of Miss Cameron!"

"Legard!" said Maltravers,—and so strong was his fervent attachment to Evelyn, that it swept away all his natural coldness and reserve—"I tell you plainly and frankly, that in my love for Evelyn Cameron lie the last hopes I have in life. I have no thought, no ambition, no sentiment that is not vowed to her. If my love should be unreturned,—I may strive to endure the blow—I may mix with the world—I may seem to occupy myself in the aims of others—but my heart will be broken! Let us talk of this no more—you have surprised my secret, though it must have betrayed itself. Learn from me how preternaturally strong—how generally fatal—is love deferred to that day when—in the stern growth of all the feelings—love writes itself on granite!"

Maltravers, as if impatient of his own weakness, put spurs to his horse, and they rode on rapidly for some time without speaking.

That silence was employed by Legard in meditating over all he had heard and witnessed—in recalling all that he owed to Maltravers; and before that silence was broken the young man nobly resolved not even to attempt, not even to hope, a rivalry with Maltravers; to forego all the expectations he had so fondly nursed—to absent himself from the company of Evelyn—to requite faithfully and firmly that act of generosity to which he owed the preservation of his life—the redemption of his honor!

Agreeably to this determination, he abstained from visiting those haunts in which Evelyn shone; and if accident brought them together, his manner was embarrasssed and abrupt. She wondered—at last, perhaps, she resented—it may be that she grieved; for certain it is that Maltravers was right in thinking that her manner had lost the gaiety that distinguished it at Merton Rectory. But still it may be doubted whether Evelyn had seen enough of Legard, and whether her fancy and romance were still sufficiently free from the magical influences of the genius that called them forth in the eloquent homage of Maltravers, to trace, herself, to any causes connected with her younger lover, the listless melancholy that crept over her. In very young women—new alike to the world and the knowledge of themselves—many vague and undefined feelings herald the dawn of Love; shade after shade, and light upon light succeeds, before the sun breaks forth, and the earth awakens to his presence.

It was one evening that Legard had suffered himself to be led into a party at the—— ambassador's, and there, as he stood by the door, he saw, at a little distance, Maltravers conversing with Evelyn. Again he writhed beneath the tortues of his jealous anguish; and there, as he gazed and suffered, he resolved (as Maltravers had done before him) a fly from the place that had a little while ago seemed to him Elysium! He would quit Paris, he would travel—he would not see Evelyn again till the irrevocable barrier was passed, and she was the wife of Maltravers! In the first heat of this determination, he turned towards some young men standing near him,—one of whom was about to visit Vienna. He gaily proposed to join him—a proposal readily accepted, and began conversing on the journey, the city, its splendid and proud society, with all that cruel exhilaration which the forced spirits of a stricken heart can alone display, when Evelyn (whose conference with Maltravers was ended) passed close by him. She was leaning on Lady Doltimore's arm, and the admiring murmur of his companions caused Legard to turn suddenly round.

"You are not dancing to-night, Colonel Legard," said Caroline, glancing towards Evelyn. "The more the season for balls advances, the more indolent you become."

Legard muttered a confused reply, one-half

of which seemed petulant, while the other half was inaudible.

"Not so indolent as you suppose," said his friend: "Legard meditates an excursion sufficient, I hope, to redeem his character in your eyes. It is a long journey, and, what is worse, a very cold journey, to Vienna."

"Vienna!—do you think of going to Vienna?" cried Caroline.

"Yes," said Legard. "I hate Paris, any place better than this odious city!" and he moved away.

Evelyn's eyes followed him sadly and gravely. She remained by Lady Doltimore's side, abstracted and silent for several minutes.

Meanwhile Caroline, turning to Lord Devonport (the friend who had proposed the Viennese excursion), said, "It is cruel in you to go to Vienna,—it is doubly cruel to rob Lord Doltimore of his best friend, and Paris of its best waltzer."

"Oh, it is a voluntary offer of Legard's, Lady Doltimore,—believe me, I have used no persuasive arts. But the fact is, that we have been talking of a fair widow, the beauty of Austria, and as proud and as unassailable as Ehrenbreitstein itself. Legard's vanity is piqued,—and so—as a professed lady-killer—he intends to see what can be effected by the handsomest Englishman of his time."

Caroline laughed,—and new claimants on her notice succeeded to Lord Devonport. It was not till the ladies were waiting their carriage in the shawl-room, that Lady Doltimore noticed the paleness and thoughtful brow of Evelyn.

"Are you fatigued or unwell, dear?" she said.

"No," answered Evelyn, forcing a smile,—and at that moment they were joined by Maltravers, with the intelligence that it would be some minutes before the carriage could draw up. Caroline amused herself in the interval, by shrewd criticisms on the dresses and characters of her various friends. Caroline had grown an amazing prude in her judgment of others!

"What a turban!—prudent for Mrs. A—— to wear—bright red: it puts out her face, as the sun puts out the fire. Mr. Maltravers, do observe Lady B—— with that *very* young gentleman. After all her experience in angling, it is odd that she should still only throw in for small fish. Pray, why is the marriage between Lady C—— D—— and Mr. F—— broken off? Is it true that he is so much in debt?—and is so very—very profligate? They say she is heart-broken."

"Really, Lady Doltimore," said Maltravers, smiling, "I am but a bad scandal-monger. But poor F—— is not, I believe, much worse than others. How do we know whose fault it is when a marriage is broken off? Lady C—— D—— heart-broken!—what an idea! Nowadays there is never any affection in compacts of that sort; and the chain that binds the frivolous nature is but a gossamer thread. Fine gentlemen and fine ladies!—their loves and their marriages

> 'May flourish and may fade—
> A breath may make them, as a breath has made.'

Never believe that a heart long accustomed to beat only in good society can be broken—it is rarely even touched!"

Evelyn listened attentively, and seemed struck. She sighed, and said in a very low voice, as to herself, "It is true—how could I think otherwise?"

For the next few days, Evelyn was unwell, and did not quit her room. Maltravers was in despair. The flowers—the books—the music he sent—his anxious inquiries, his earnest and respectful notes—touched with that ineffable charm which Heart and Intellect breathe into the most trifling coinage from their mint—all affected Evelyn sensibly;—perhaps she contrasted them with Legard's indifference and apparent caprice;—perhaps in that contrast, Maltravers gained more than by all his brilliant qualities. Meanwhile, without visit—without message—without farewell—unconscious, it is true, of Evelyn's illness,—Legard departed for Vienna.

CHAPTER III.

> "A pleasing land * * *
> Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye,
> And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
> For ever flashing round a summer sky."
> —THOMSON.

DAILY—hourly—increased the influence of Evelyn over Maltravers. Oh, what a dupe is a man's pride!—what a fool his wisdom!

That a girl—a mere child,—one who scarce knew her own heart—beautiful as it was,—whose deeper feelings still lay coiled up in their sweet buds,—that she should thus master this proud, wise man! But as thou—our universal teacher—as thou, O Shakespeare! haply speaking from the hints of thine own experience—hast declared—

"None are so truly caught, when they are catch'd,
As wit turned fool;—folly in wisdom hatched,
Hath wisdom's warrant."

Still, methinks that, in that surpassing and dangerously indulged affection which levelled thee, Maltravers, with the weakest, which overturned all thy fine philosophy of Stoicism, and made thee the veriest slave of the "Rose-Garden,"—still, Maltravers, thou mightst, at least, have seen that thou hadst lost for ever all right to pride, all privilege to disdain the herd! But thou wert proud of thine own infirmity! And far sharper must be that lesson which can teach thee that Pride—thine angel—is ever pre-doomed to fall!

What a mistake to suppose that the passions are strongest in youth! The passions are not stronger, but the control over them is weaker. They are more easily excited—they are more violent and more apparent,—but they have less energy, less durability, less intense and concentrated power, than in maturer life. In youth, passion succeeds to passion, and one breaks upon the other, as waves upon a rock, till the heart frets itself to repose. In manhood, the great deep flows on, more calm, but more profound, its serenity is the proof of the might and terror of its course, were the wind to blow and the storm to rise.

A young man's ambition is but vanity,—it has no definite aim,—it plays with a thousand toys. As with one passion, so with the rest. In youth, love is ever on the wing, but, like the birds in April, it hath not yet built its nest. With so long a career of summer and bope before it, the disappointment of to-day is succeeded by the novelty of to-morrow, and the sun that advances to the noon but dries up its fervent tears. But when we have arrived at that epoch of life,—when if the light fail us, if the last rose wither, we feel that the loss cannot be retrieved, and that the frost and the darkness are at hand, Love becomes to us a a treasure that we watch over and hoard with a miser's care. Our youngest-born affection is our darling and our idol, the fondest pledge of the Past, the most cherished of our hopes for the Future. A certain melancholy that mingles with our joy at the possession only enhances its charm. We feel ourselves so dependent on it for all that is yet to come. Our other barks—our gay galleys of pleasure—our stately argosies of pride—have been swallowed up by the remorseless wave. On this last vessel we freight our all—to its frail tenement we commit ourselves. The star that guides it is our guide, and in the tempest that menaces we behold our own doom!

Still Maltravers shrank from the confession that trembled on his lips—still he adhered to the course he had prescribed to himself. If ever (as he had implied in his letter to Cleveland)—if ever Evelyn should discover they were not suited to each other! The possibility of such an affliction impressed his judgment—the dread of it chilled his heart! With all his pride, there was a certain humility in Maltravers that was perhaps one cause of his reserve. He knew what a beautifnl possession is youth—its sanguine hopes—its elastic spirit—its inexhaustible resources! What to the eyes of woman were the acquisitions which manhood had brought him?—the vast, but the sad experience—the arid wisdom—the philosophy based on disappointment? He might be loved but for the vain glitter of name and reputation,—and love might vanish as custom dimmed the illusion. Men of strong affections are jealous of their own genius. They know how separate a thing from the household character genius often is,—they fear lest they should be loved for a quality, not for themselves.

Thus communed he with himself—thus, as the path has become clear to his hopes, did new fears arise; and thus did love bring, as it ever does, in its burning wake,

"The pang, the agony, the doubt!"

Maltravers then confirmed himself in the resolution he had formed: he would cautiously examine Evelyn and himself—he would weigh in the balance every straw that the wind should turn up—he would not aspire to the treasure, unless he could feel secure that the coffer could preserve the gem. This was not only a prudent, it was a just and a generous determi-

nation. It was one which we all ought to form if the fervor of our passions will permit us. We have no right to sacrifice years to moments, and to melt the pearl that has no price in a single draught! But can Maltravers adhere to his wise precautions? The truth must be spoken—it was perhaps the first time in his life that Maltravers had been really *in* love.

As the reader will remember, he had not been in love with the haughty Florence; admiration, gratitude—the affection of the head, not that of the feelings,—had been the links that bound him to the enthusiastic correspondent—revealed in the gifted beauty;—and the gloomy circumstances connected with her early fate, had left deep furrows in his memory. Time and vicissitude had effaced the wounds, and the Light of the Beautiful dawned once more in the face of Evelyn. Valerie De Ventadour had been but the fancy of a roving breast. Alice, the sweet Alice!—her, indeed, in the first flower of youth, he had loved with a boy's romance. He had loved her deeply, fondly—but perhaps he had never been *in* love with her; he had mourned her loss for years—insensibly to himself her loss had altered his character and cast a melancholy gloom over all the colors of his life. But she whose range of ideas was so confined—she who had but broke into knowledge, as the chrysalis into the butterfly—how much in that prodigal and gifted nature, bounding onwards into the broad plains of life, must the peasant girl have failed to fill! They had had nothing in common, but their youth and their love. It was a dream that had hovered over the poet-boy in the morning twilight — a dream he had often wished to recall—a dream that had haunted him in the noon-day,—but had, as all boyish visions ever have done, left the heart unexhausted, and the passions unconsumed! Years—long years — since then had rolled away, and yet perhaps one unconscious attraction that drew Maltravers so suddenly towards Evelyn was a something indistinct and undefinable that reminded him of Alice. There was no similarity in their features; but at times a tone in Evelyn's voice—a "trick of the manner"—an air—a gesture—recalled him, over the gulfs of Time, to Poetry, and Hope, and Alice.

In the youth of each—the absent and the present one—there was resemblance,—resemblance in their simplicity, the grace. Perhaps, Alice, of the two, had in her nature more real depth, more ardor of feeling, more sublimity of sentiment, than Evelyn. But in her primitive ignorance, half her noblest qualities were embedded and unknown. And Evelyn—his equal in rank — Evelyn, well cultivated—Evelyn, so long courted—so deeply studied—had such advantages over the poor peasant girl! Still the poor peasant girl often seemed to smile on him from that fair face. And in Evelyn he half loved Alice again!

So these two persons now met daily; their intercourse was even more familiar than before—their several minds grew hourly more developed and transparent to each other. But of love, Maltravers still forbore to speak;—they were friends,—no more; such friends as the disparity of their years and their experience might warrant them to be. And in that young and innocent nature—with its rectitude, its enthusiasm, and its pious and cheerful tendencies—Maltravers found freshness in the desert, as the camel-driver lingering at the well. Insensibly his heart warmed again to his kind. And as the harp of David to the ear of Saul, was the soft voice that lulled remembrance and awakened hope in the lonely man.

Meanwhile, what was the effect that the presence, the attentions, of Maltravers produced on Evelyn! Perhaps it was of that kind which most flatters us and most deceives. She never dreamed of comparing him with others. To her thoughts he stood aloof and alone from all his kind. It may seem a paradox, but it might be that she admired and venerated him almost too much for love. Still her pleasure in his society was so evident and unequivocal, her deference to his opinion so marked,—she sympathized in so many of his objects—she had so much blindness or forbearance for his faults (and he never sought to mask them), that the most diffident of men might have drawn from so many symptoms hopes the most auspicious. Since the departure of Legard, the gaieties of Paris lost their charm for Evelyn, and more than ever she could appreciate the society of her friend. He thus gradually lost his earlier fears of her forming too keen an attachment to the great world; and as nothing could be more apparent than Evelyn's indifference to the crowd of flatterers and suitors that hovered round her,

Maltravers no longer dreaded a rival. He began to feel assured that they had both gone through the ordeal; and that he might ask for love without a doubt of its immutability and faith. At this period, they were both invited, with the Doltimores, to spend a few days at the villa of de Montaigne, near St. Cloud. And there it was that Maltravers determined to know his fate!

CHAPTER IV.

"Chaos of Thought and Passion all confused."—POPE.

IT is to the contemplation of a very different scene that the course of our story now conducts us.

Between St. Cloud and Versailles there was at that time—perhaps there still is—a lone and melancholy house, appropriated to the insane. Melancholy—not from its site, but the purpose to which it is devoted. Placed on an eminence, the windows of the mansion command—beyond the gloomy walls that gird the garden ground—one of those enchanting prospects which win for France her title to *La Belle*. There, the glorious Seine is seen in the disdance, broad and winding through the varied plains, and beside the gleaming villages and villas. There. too, beneath the clear blue sky of France, the forest-lands of Versailles and St. Germain's stretch in dark-luxuriance around and afar. There you may see sleeping on the verge of the landscape, the mighty city—crowned with the thousand spires from which, proud above the rest, rises the eyrie of Napoleon's eagle, the pinnacle of Notre Dame.

Remote, sequestered, the place still commands the survey of the turbulent world below. And madness gazes upon prospects that might well charm the thoughtful eyes of Imagination or of Wisdom! In one of the rooms of this house sate Castruccio Cesarini. The apartment was furnished even with elegance; a variety of books strewed the tables—nothing for comfort or for solace, that the care and providence of affection could dictate, was omitted.—Cesarini was alone; leaning his cheek upon his hand, he gazed on the beautiful and tranquil view we have described. "And am I never to set a free foot on that soil again?" he muttered indignantly, as he broke from his revery.

The door opened, and the keeper of the sad abode (a surgeon of humanity and eminence) entered, followed by De Montaigne. Cesarini turned round and scowled upon the latter; the surgeon, after a few words of salutation, withdrew to a corner of the room, and appeared absorbed in a book. De Montaigne approached his brother-in-law—"I have brought you some poems just published at Milan, my dear Castruccio—they will please you."

"Give me my liberty!" cried Cesarini, clenching his hands. "Why am I to be detained here? Why are my nights to be broken by the groans of maniacs, and my days devoured in a solitude that loathes the aspect of things around me? Am *I* mad?—You know I am not! It is an old trick to say that poets are mad—you mistake our agonies for insanity. See, I am calm—I can reason: give me any test of sound mind—no matter how rigid—I will pass it. I am not mad—I swear I am not!"

"No, my dear Castruccio," said De Montaigne, soothingly, "but you are still unwell—you still have fever;—when next I see you perhaps you may be recovered sufficiently to dismiss the doctor and change the air. Meanwhile, is there anything you would have added or altered?"

Cesarini had listened to this speech with a mocking sarcasm on his lip, but an expression of such hopeless wretchedness in his eyes, as they alone can comprehend who have witnessed madness in its lucid intervals. He sunk down, and his head drooped gloomily on his breast. "No," said he; "I want nothing but free air or death—no matter which."

De Montaigne stayed some time with the unhappy man, and sought to soothe him; but it was in vain. Yet, when he rose to depart, Cesarini started up, and fixing on him his large wistful eyes, exclaimed—"Ah! do not leave me yet. It is so dreadful to be alone with the dead and the worse than dead!"

The Frenchman turned aside to wipe his eyes, and stifle the rising at his heart; and again he sate, and again he sought to soothe. At length Cesarini, seemingly more calm, gave him leave to depart. "Go," said he, "go—tell Teresa I am better—that I love her tenderly—that I shall live to tell her children not

to be poets. Stay; you asked if there was aught I wished changed—yes—this room; it is too still: I hear my own pulse beat so loudly in the silence—it is horrible !—there is a room below, by the window of which there is a tree, and the winds rock its boughs to and fro, and it sighs and groans like a living thing;—it will be pleasant to look at that tree, and see the birds come home to it,—yet that tree is wintry and blasted too !—it will be pleasant to hear it fret and chafe in the stormy nights: it will be a friend to me, that old tree ! let me have that room. Nay, look not at each other—it is not so high as this—but the window is barred—I cannot escape !" And Cesarini smiled.

"Certainly," said the surgeon, "if you prefer that room; but it has not so fine a view."

"I hate the view of the world that has cast me off—when may I change ?"

"This very evening."

"Thank you—it will be a great revolution in my life."

And Cesarini's eyes brightened, and he looked happy. De Montaigne, thoroughly unmanned, tore himself away.

The promise was kept, and Cesarini was transferred that night to the chamber he had selected.

As soon as it was deep night—the last visit of the keeper paid—and, save now and then, by some sharp cry in the more distant quarter of the house, all was still, Cesarini rose from his bed; a partial light came from the stars that streamed through the frosty and keen air, and cast a sickly gleam through the heavy bars of the casement. It was then that Cesarini drew from under his pillow a long-cherished and carefully-concealed treasure. Oh ! with what rapture had he first possessed himself of it !—with what anxiety had it been watched and guarded !—how many cunning stratagems and profound inventions had gone towards the baffling the jealous search of the keeper and his myrmidons ! The abandoned and wandering mother never clasped her child more fondly to her bosom, nor gazed upon its features with more passionate visions for the future. And what had so enchanted the poor prisoner—so deluded the poor maniac? A large nail ? He had found it accidently in the garden—he had hoarded it for weeks—it had inspired him with the hope of liberty. Often, in the days far gone, he had read of the wonders that had been effected—of the stones removed and the bars filed, by the self-same kind of implement. He remembered that the most celebrated of those bold unfortunates who live a life against law, had said, "Choose my prison, and give me but a rusty nail, and I laugh at your jailers and your walls !" He crept to the window—he examined his relic by the dim starlight—he kissed it passionately, and the tears stood in his eyes.

Ah ! who shall determine the worth of things ? No king that night so prized his crown, as the madman prized that rusty inch of wire—the proper prey of the rubbish-cart and dunghill. Little didst thou think, old blacksmith, when thou drewest the dull metal from the fire, of what precious price it was to become !

Cesarini, with the astuteness of his malady, had long marked out this chamber for the scene of his operations; he had observed that the framework in which the bars were set seemed old and worm eaten—that the window was but a few feet from the ground—that the noise made in the winter nights by the sighing branches of the old tree without would deaden the sound of the lone workman. Now, then, his hopes were to be crowned. Poor Fool ! and even *thou* hast hope still ! All that night he toiled and toiled, and sought to work his iron into a file; now he tried the bars, and now the framework. Alas ! he had not learned the skill in such tools, possessed by his renowned model and inspirer; the flesh was worn from his fingers—the cold drops stood on his brow —and morning surprised him, advanced not a hair's-breadth in his labor.

He crept back to bed, and again hid the useless implement, and at last he slept.

And, night after night, the same task—the same results ! But at length, one day, when Cesarini returned from his moody walk in the gardens (*pleasure*-grounds they were called by the owner), he found better workmen than he at the window; they were repairing the framework, they were strengthening the bars—all hope was now gone ! The unfortunate said nothing; too cunning to show his despair—he eyed them silently, and cursed them; but the old tree was left still, and that was something —company and music !

A day or two after this barbarous counterplot, Cesarini was walking in the gardens,

toward the latter part of the afternoon (just when, in the short days, the darkness begins to steal apace over the chill and western sun), when he was accosted by a fellow-captive, who had often before sought his acquaintance; for they try to have friends—those poor people! Even *we* do the same; though *we* say we are *not* mad! This man had been a warrior—had served with Napoleon—had received honors and ribands—might, for aught we know, have dreamed of being a marshal! But the demon smote him in the hour of his pride. It was his disease to fancy himself a Monarch. He believed, for he forgot chronology, that he was at once the Iron Mask, and the true sovereign of France and Navarre, confined in state by the usurpers of his crown. On other points he was generally sane; a tall, strong man, with fierce features, and stern lines, wherein could be read many a bloody tale of violence and wrong—of lawless passions—of terrible excesses—to which madness might be at once the consummation and the curse. This man had taken a fancy to Cesarini; and in some hours, Cesarini had shunned him less than others; for they could alike rail against all living things. The lunatic approached Cesarini with an air of dignity and condescension—

"It is a cold night, sir,—and there will be no moon. Has it never occurred to you that the winter is the season for escape?"

Cesarini started—the ex-officer continued:

"Ay,—I see by your manner that you, too, chafe at our ignominious confinement. I think that together we might brave the worst. You probably are confined on some state offence. I give you full pardon, if you assist me. For myself, I have but to appear in my capital—old Louis le Grand must be near his last hour."

"This madman my best companion!" thought Cesarini, revolted at his own infirmity, as Gulliver started from the Yahoo. "No matter, he talks of escape."

"And how think you," said the Italian, aloud,—"how think you, that we have any chance of deliverance?"

"Hush—speak lower," said the soldier. "In the inner garden, I have observed for the last two days that a gardener is employed in nailing some fig-trees and vines to the wall. Between that garden and these grounds there is but a paling, which we can easily scale He works till dusk; at the latest hour we can, let us climb noiselessly over the paling, and creep along the vegetable beds till we reach the man. He uses a ladder for his purpose,—the rest is clear,—we must fell and gag him—twist his neck if nccessary—I have twisted a neck before," quoth the maniac, with a horrid smile. "The ladder will help us over the wall—and the night soon grows dark at this season."

Cesarini listened, and his heart beat quick. "Will it be too late to try to-night?" said he in a whisper.

"Perhaps not," said the soldier, who retained all this military acuteness. "But are you prepared?—don't you require time to man yourself?"

"No—no,—I have had time enough!—I am ready."

"Well, then,—hist!—we are watched—one of the jailers!—Talk easily—smile—laugh.—This way." They passed by one of the watch of the place, and just as they were in his hearing, the soldier turned to Cesarini,—"Sir, will you favor me with your snuff-box?"

"I have none."

"None—what a pity! My good friend," and he turned to the scout, "may I request you to look in my room for my snuff-box?—it is on the chimney-piece—it will not take you a minute."

The soldier was one of those whose insanity was deemed most harmless and his relations, who were rich and well-born, had requested every indulgence to be shown to him. The watch suspected nothing, and repaired to the house. As soon as the trees hid him,—"Now," said the soldier, "stoop almost on all fours, and run quick."

So saying, the maniac crouched low, and glided along with a rapidity which did not distance Cesarini. They reached the palling that separated the vegetable garden from the pleasure ground—the soldier vaulted over it with ease—Cesarini, with more difficulty, followed,—they crept along; the herbs and vegetable beds, with their long bare stalks, concealed their movements; the man was still on the ladder. "*La bonne Esperance!*" said the soldier, through his ground teeth, muttering some old watchword of the wars, and (while Cesarini, below, held the ladder steadfast) he rushed up

the steps—and, with a sudden effort of his muscular arm, hurled the gardener to the ground. The man, surprised, half stunned, and wholly terrified, did not attempt to wrestle with the two madmen,—he uttered loud cries for help! But help came too late; these strange and fearful comrades had already scaled the wall, had dropped on the other side, and were fast making across the dusky fields to the neighboring forest.

CHAPTER V.

"Hopes and Fears
Start up alarmed, and o'er life's narrow verge
Look down: on what?—a fathomless abyss!"
—YOUNG.

MIDNIGHT—and intense frost!—there they were—houseless and breadless—the two fugitives, in the heart of that beautiful forest which has rung to the horns of many a royal chase. The soldier, whose youth had been inured to hardships, and to the conquests which our mother-wit wrings from the step-dame Nature—had made a fire by the friction of two pieces of dry wood; such wood was hard to be found, for the snow whitened the level ground, and lay deep in the hollows; and when it was discovered, the fuel was slow to burn; however, the fire blazed red at last. On a little mound, shaded by a semicircle of huge trees, sate the Outlaws of Human Reason. They cowered over the blaze opposite to each other, and the glare crimsoned their features. And each in his heart longed to rid himself of his mad neighbor; and each felt the awe of solitude—the dread of sleep beside a comrade whose soul had lost God's light!

"Ho!" said the warrior, breaking a silence that had been long kept, "this is cold work at the best, and hunger pinches me; I almost regret the prison."

"I do not feel the cold," said Cesarini, "and I do not care for hunger: I am revelling only in the sense of liberty!"

"Try and sleep," quoth the soldier, with a coaxing and sinister softness of voice; "we will take it by turns to watch."

"I cannot sleep—take you the first turn."

"Harkye, sir!" said the soldier, sullenly: "I must not have my commands disputed; now we are free, we are no longer equal: I am heir to the crowns of France and Navarre. Sleep, I say!"

"And what Prince or Potentate, King or Kaisar," cried Cesarini, catching the quick contagion of the fit that had seized his comrade, "can dictate to the Monarch of Earth and Air—the Elements and the music-breathing Stars?—I am Cesarini the Bard! and the huntsman Orion halts in his chase above to listen to my lyre! Be stilled, rude man!—thou scarest away the angels, whose breath even now was rushing through my hair!"

"It is too horrible!" cried the grim man of blood, shivering; "my enemies are relentless, and give me a madman for a jailer!"

"Ha!—a madman!" exclaimed Cesarini, springing to his feet, and glaring at the soldier with eyes that caught and rivalled the blaze of the fire. "And who are you?—what devil from the deep hell, that art leagued with my persecutors against me?"

With the instinct of his old calling and valor, the soldier also rose when he saw the movement of his companion; and his fierce features worked with rage and fear.

"Avaunt!" said he, waving his arm; "we banish thee from our presence!—This is our palace—and our guards are at hand!" pointing to the still and skeleton trees that grouped round in ghastly bareness. "Begone!"

At that moment they heard at a distance the deep barking of a dog, and each cried simultaneously—"They are after me!—betrayed!" The soldier sprung at the throat of Cesarini; but the Italian, at the same instant, caught a half-burnt brand from the fire, and dashed the blazing end in the face of his assailant. The soldier uttered a cry of pain, and recoiled back, blinded and dismayed. Cesarini, whose madness, when fairly roused, was of the most deadly nature, again raised his weapon, and, probably, nothing but death could have separated the foes; but again the bay of the dog was heard, and Cesarini, answering the sound by a wild yell, threw down the brand, and fled away through the forest with inconceivable swiftness. He hurried on through bush and dell—and the boughs tore his garments and mangled his flesh—but stopped not his progress till he fell at last on the ground, breathless and exhausted, and heard from some far-off clock the second

hour of morning. He had left the forest—a farm-house stood before him; and the whitened roofs of scattered cottages sloped to the tranquil sky. The witness of man—the social tranquil sky and the reasoning man—operated like a charm upon the senses which recent excitement had more than usually disturbed. The unhappy wretch gazed at the peaceful abodes, and sighed heavily; then, rising from the earth, he crept into one of the sheds that adjoined the farm-house, and throwing himself on some straw, slept sound and quietly till daylight, and the voices of peasants in the shed awakened him.

He rose refreshed, calm, and, for ordinary purposes, sufficiently sane to prevent suspicion of his disease. He approached the startled peasants, and, representing himself as a traveller who had lost his way in the night and amidst the forest, begged for food and water. Though his garments were torn, they were new and of good fashion; his voice was mild; his whole appearance and address those of one of some station—and the French peasant is a hospitable fellow. Cesarini refreshed and rested himself an hour or two at the farm, and then resumed his wanderings; he offered no money, for the rules of the asylum forbade money to its inmates;—he had none with him—but none was expected from him; and they bade him farewell as kindly as if he had bought their blessings. He then began to consider where he was to take refuge, and how provide for himself; the feeling of liberty braced, and for a time restored, his intellect.

Fortunately, he had on his person, besides some rings of trifling cost, a watch of no inconsiderable value, the sale of which might support him, in such obscure and humble quarter as he could alone venture to inhabit, for several weeks—perhaps months. This thought made him cheerful and elated; he walked lustily on, shunning the high road—the day was clear—the sun bright—the air full of racy health. Oh! what soft raptures swelled the heart of the wanderer, as he gazed around him! The Poet and the Freeman alike stirred within his shattered heart! He paused to contemplate the berries of the icy trees—to listen to the sharp glee of the blackbird—and once—when he found beneath a hedge a cold, scentless group of hardy violets—he laughed aloud in his joy. In that laughter there was no madness—no danger; but when, as he journeyed on, he passed through a little hamlet, and saw the children at play upon the ground, and heard from the open door of a cabin, the sound of rustic music then, indeed, he paused abruptly; the past gathered over him; *he knew that which he had been—that which he was now!*—an awful memory!—a dread revelation! And, covering his face with his hands, he wept aloud. In those tears were the peril and the method of madness. He woke from them to think of his youth—his hopes—of Florence—of Revenge!—Lumley, Lord Vargrave! better, from that hour, to encounter the tiger in his lair, than find thyself alone with that miserable man!

CHAPTER VI.

"It seem'd the laurel chaste and stubborn oak,
And all the gentle trees on earth that grew;
It seem'd the land, the sea, and heaven above,
All breathed out fancy sweet, and sigh'd out love."
—FAIRFAX'S *Tasso.*

AT De Montaigne's Villa, Evelyn, for the first time, gathered from the looks, the manners of Maltravers, that she was beloved. It was no longer possible to mistake the evidences of affection. Formerly, Maltravers had availed himself of his advantage of years and experience, and would warn, admonish, dispute, even reprove; formerly, there had been so much of seeming caprice, of cold distance, of sudden and wayward haughtiness, in his bearing;—but now, the whole man was changed—the Mentor had vanished in the Lover:—he held his being on her breath. Her lightest pleasure seemed to have grown his law—no coldness ever alternated the deep devotion of his manner; an anxious, a timid, a watchful softness replaced all his stately self-possession. Evelyn saw that she was loved; and she then looked into her own heart.

I have said before that Evelyn was gentle, even to *yieldingness;* that her susceptibility made her shrink from the thought of pain to another; and so thoroughly did she revere Maltravers—so grateful did she feel for a love that could not but flatter pride, and raise her in her self-esteem—that she felt it impossible that she could reject his suit. Then, "do I love him as I dreamt I could love?" she asked

herself; and her heart gave no intelligible reply. "Yes!—it must be so;—in his presence I feel a tranquil and eloquent charm; his praise delights me; his esteem is my most high ambition;—and yet—and yet——" she sighed, and thought of Legard, "but *he* loved me not!" and she turned restlessly from that image. "He thinks but of the world—of pleasure; Maltravers is right—the spoiled children of society cannot love: why should I think of him?"

There was no guests at the villa, except Maltravers, Evelyn, and Lord and Lady Doltimore. Evelyn was much captivated by the graceful vivacity of Teresa, though that vivacity was not what it had been before her brother's affliction; their children, some of whom were grown up, constituted an amiable and intelligent family; and De Montaigne himself was agreeable and winning, despite his sober manners, and his love of philosophical dispute. Evelyn often listened thoughtfully to Teresa's praises of her husband—to her account of the happiness she had known in a marriage where there had been so great a disparity of years;—Evelyn began to question the truth of her early visions of romance.

Caroline saw the unequivocal attachment of Maltravers with the same indifference with which she had anticipated the suit of Legard. It was the same to her what hand delivered Evelyn and herself from the designs of Vargrave;—but Vargrave occupied nearly all her thoughts. The newspapers had reported him as seriously ill—at one time in great danger. He was now recovering, but still unable to quit his room. He had written to her once, lamenting his ill-fortune—trusting soon to be at Paris; and touching, with evident pleasure, upon Legard's departure for Vienna, which he had seen in the "Morning Post." But he was afar — alone — ill—untended; — and though Caroline's guilty love had been much abated by Vargrave's icy selfishness—by absence and remorse—still she had the heart of a woman; and Vargrave was the only one that had ever touched it. She felt for him, and grieved in silence; she did not dare to utter sympathy aloud, for Doltimore had already given evidence of a suspicious and jealous temper.

Evelyn was also deeply affected by the account of her guardian's illness. As I before said, the moment he ceased to be her lover, her childish affection for him returned. She even permitted herself to write to him; and a tone of melancholy depression which artfully prevaded his reply struck her with something like remorse. He told her in that letter, that he had much to say to her relative to an investment, in conformity with her step-father's wishes, and he should hasten to Paris, even before the doctor would sanction his removal. Vargrave forbore to mention what the meditated investment was. The last public accounts of the Minister had, however, been so favorable, that his arrival might be almost daily expected; and both Caroline and Evelyn felt relieved.

To De Montaigne, Maltravers confided his attachment, and both the Frenchman and Teresa sanctioned and encouraged it. Evelyn enchanted them; and they had passed that age when they could have imagined it possible that the man they had known almost as a boy was separated by years from the lively feelings and extreme youth of Evelyn. They could not believe that the sentiments he had inspired were colder than those that animated himself.

One day, Maltravers had been absent for some hours on his solitary rambles, and De Montaigne had not yet returned from Paris—which he visited almost daily. It was so late in the noon as almost to border on evening, when Maltravers, on his return, entered the grounds by a gate that separated them from an extensive wood. He saw Evelyn, Teresa, and two of her children, walking on a kind of terrace almost immediately before him. He joined them; and, somehow or other, it soon chanced that Teresa and himself loitered behind the rest—a little distance out of hearing. "Ah, Mr. Maltravers," said the former, "we miss the soft skies of Italy and the beautiful hues of Como."

"And for my part. I miss the youth that gave 'glory to the grass and splendor to the flower.'"

"Nay; we are happier now, believe me,—or at least I should be, if—but I must not think of my poor brother. Ah! if his guilt deprived you of one who was worthy of you, it would be some comfort to his sister to think at last that the loss was repaired. And you still have scruples?"

"Who that loves truly has not? How

young—how lovely—how worthy of lighter hearts and fairer forms than mine! Give me back the years that have passed since we last met at Como, and I might hope!"

"And this to me, who have enjoyed such happiness with one older, when we married, by ten years than you are now?"

"But you, Teresa, were born to see life through the Claude glass."

"Ah, you provoke me with these refinements—you turn from a happiness you have but to demand."

"Do not—do not raise my hopes too high," cried Maltravers, with great emotion; "I have been schooling myself all day. But if I *am* deceived!"

"Trust me, you are not. See, even now she turns round to look for you—she loves you—loves you as you deserve. This difference of years that you so lament does but deepen and elevate her attachment!"

Teresa turned to Maltravers—surprised at his silence. How joyous sate his heart upon his looks—no gloom on his brow—no doubt in his sparkling eyes! He was mortal, and he yielded to the delight of believing himself beloved. He pressed Teresa's hand in silence, and quitting her abruptly, gained the side of Evelyn. Madame de Montaigne comprehended all that passed within him; and as she followed, she soon contrived to detach her children, and returned with them to the house on a whispered pretence of seeing if their father had yet arrived. Evelyn and Maltravers continued to walk on—not aware, at first, that the rest of the party were not close behind.

The sun had set; and they were in a part of the grounds which, by way of contrast to the rest, was laid out in the English fashion; the walk wound, serpent-like, among a profusion of evergreens irrepularly planted; the scene was shut in and bounded, except where at a distance, through an opening of the trees, you caught the spire of a distant church, over which glimmered, faint and fair, the smile of the evening star.

"This reminds me of home," said Evelyn, gently.

"And hereafter it will remind me of you," said Maltravers, in whispered accents. He fixed his eyes on her as he spoke. Never had his look been so true to his heart—never had his voice so undisguisedly expressed the profound and passionate sentiment which had sprung up within him—to constitute, as he then believed, the latest bliss, or the crowning misery of his life! At that moment, it was a sort of instinct that told him they were *alone;* for who has not felt—in those few and memorable hours of life when love long suppressed overflows the fountain, and seems to pervade the whole frame and the whole spirit—that there is a magic around and within us that hath a keener intelligence than intellect itself? Alone at such an hour with the one we love, the whole world beside seems to vanish, and our feet to have entered the soil, and our lips to have caught the air, of Fairy Land.

They were alone.—And why did Evelyn tremble?—Why did she feel that a crisis of existence was at hand?

"Miss Cameron—Evelyn,"—said Maltravers, after they had walked some moments in silence,—"hear me—and let your reason as well as your heart reply. From the first moment we met, you became dear to me. Yes, even when a child, your sweetness and your fortitude foretold so well what you would be in womanhood: even then you left upon my memory a delightful and mysterious shadow—too prophetic of the light that now hallows and wraps your image! We met again—and the attraction that had drawn me towards you years before was suddenly renewed.—I love you, Evelyn!—I love you better than all words can tell!—Your future fate, your welfare, your happiness, contain and embody all the hopes left to me in life? But our years are different, Evelyn, I have known sorrows—and the disappointments and the experience that have severed me from the common world have robbed me of more than time itself hath done. They have robbed of that zest for the ordinary pleasures of our race—which may it be yours, sweet Evelyn, ever to retain. To me, the time foretold by the Preacher as the lot of age has already arrived—when the sun and the moon are darkened, and when, save in you and through you, I have no pleasure in any thing. Judge, if such a being you can love! Judge, if my very confession does not revolt and chill—if it does not present to you a gloomy and cheerless future—were it possible that you could unite your lot to mine! Answer not from friendship or from pity; the love I feel for

you can have a repiy from love alone, and from that reasoning which love, in its enduring power—in its healthful confidence—in its prophetic foresight—alone supplies! I can resign you without a murmur—but I could not live with you and even fancy that you had one care I could not soothe, though you might have happiness I could not share. And fate does not present to me any vision so dark and terrible—no, not your loss itself—no, not your indifference—no, not your aversion,—as your discovery—after time should make regret in vain, that you had mistaken fancy or friendship for affection—a sentiment for love. Evelyn, I have confided to you all—all this wild heart, now and evermore your own. My destiny is with you!"

Evelyn was silent—he took her hand—and her tears fell warm and fast upon it. Alarmed and anxious, he drew her towards him and gazed upon her face.

"You fear to wound me," he said, with pale lips and trembling voice. "Speak on,—I can bear all."

"No—no," said Evelyn, falteringly; "I have no fear, but not to deserve you."

"You love me, then,—you love me!" cried Maltravers wildly, and clasping her to his heart.

The moon rose at that instant, and the wintry sward and the dark trees were bathed in the sudden light. The time—the light—so equisite to all—even in loneliness and in sorrow—how divine in such companionship!—in such overflowing and ineffable sense of bliss! There and then for the first time did Maltravers press upon that modest and blushing cheek the kiss of Love—of Hope,—the seal of a union he fondly hoped the grave itself could not dissolve!

CHAPTER VII.

"*Queen.* Whereon do you look?
Hamlet. On him—on him,—look you how pale he glares!"—*Hamlet.*

PERHAPS to Maltravers those few minutes which ensued, as they walked slowly on, compensated for all the troubles and cares of years; —for natures like his feel joy even yet more intensely than sorrow. It might be that the transport—the delirium of passionate and grateful thoughts that he poured forth—when at last he could summon words—expressed feelings the young Evelyn could not comprehend, and which less delighted than terrified her with the new responsibility she had incurred. But love so honest—so generous—so intense—dazzled and bewildered, and carried her whole soul away. Certainly at that hour she felt no regret—no thought but that one in whom she had so long recognized something nobler than is found in the common world—was thus happy and thus made happy by a word—a look from her! Such a thought is woman's dearest triumph,—and one so thoroughly unselfish—so yielding and so soft—could not be insensible to the rapture she had caused.

"And oh!" said Maltravers, as he clasped again and again the hand that he believed he had won for ever, "now, at length, have I learned how beautiful is life! For this—for this I have been reserved? Heaven is merciful to me—and the waking world is brighter than all my dreams?"

He ceased abruptly. At that instant they were once more on the terrace where he had first joined Teresa—facing the wood—which was divided by a slight and low palisade from the spot where they stood. He ceased abruptly, for his eyes encountered a terrible and omnious opposition—a form connected with dreary associations of fate and woe. The figure had raised itself upon a pile of firewood on the other side the fence, and hence it seemed almost gigantic in its stature. It gazed upon the pair with eyes that burned with a perternatural blaze, and a voice which Maltravers too well remembered shrieked out, —"Love—love! What! *thou* love again? Where is the Dead? Ha!—ha! Where is the Dead?"

Evelyn, startled by the words, looked up, and clung in speechless terror to Maltravers. He remained rooted to the spot.

"Unhappy man," said he, at length, and soothingly, "how came you hither? Fly not, you are with friends."

"Friends!" said the maniac, with a scornful laugh. "I know thee, Ernest Maltravers,—I know thee: but it is not thou who has locked me up in darkness and in hell, side by side with the mocking fiends! Friends!—ah, but no friends

shall catch me now! I am free!—I am free!—air and wave are not more free!" and the madman laughed with horrible glee. "She is fair—fair," he said, abruptly checking himself, and with a changed voice, "but not so fair as the Dead. Faithless that thou art—and yet she loved *thee!* Woe to thee!—woe—Maltravers, the perfidious! Woe to thee—and remorse—and shame!"

"Fear not, Evelyn,—fear not," whispered Maltravers, gently, and placing her behind him; "Support your courage—nothing shall harm you."

Evelyn, though very pale, and trembling from head to foot, retained her senses. Maltravers advanced towards the madman. But no sooner did the quick eye of the last perceive the movement, than, with the fear which belongs to that dread disease—the fear of losing liberty, he turned, and, with a loud cry, fled into the wood. Maltravers leaped over the fence, and pursued him some way in vain. The thick copses of the wood snatched every trace of the fugitive from his eye.

Breathless and exhausted, Maltravers returned to the spot where he had left Evelyn. As he reached it, he saw Teresa and her husband approaching towards him, and Teresa's merry laugh sounded clear and musical in the racy air. The sound appalled him—he hastened his steps to Evelyn.

"Say nothing of what we have seen to Madame de Montaigne, I beseech you," said he; "I will explain why hereafter."

Evelyn, too overcome to speak, nodded her acquiescence. They joined the De Montaignes and Maltravers took the Frenchman aside.

But before he could address him, De Montaigne said,

"Hush! do not alarm my wife—she knows nothing—but I have just heard, at Paris, that—that he has escaped—you know whom I mean?"

"I do—he is at hand—send in search of him!—I have seen him!—once more I have seen Castruccio Cesarini!"

BOOK NINTH.

Αἰ αἰ· τὰδ' ἤδη διαφανῆ.—SOPH. *Œdip. Tyran.* 754.

Woe, woe: all things are clear.

CHAPTER I.

"The privilege that statesmen ever claim,
Who private interest never yet pursued,
But still pretended 't was for others' good
* * * * *
From hence on every humorous wind that veer'd
With shifted sails a several course you steer'd."
—*Absalom and Achitophel*, Part II.

LORD VARGRAVE had for more than a fortnight remained at the inn at M——, too ill to be removed with safety in a season so severe. Even when at last, by easy stages, he reached London, he was subjected to a relapse; and his recovery was slow and gradual. Hitherto unused to sickness, he bore his confinement with extreme impatience; and, against the commands of his physician, insisted on continuing to transact his official business, and consult with his political friends in his sick room; for Lumley knew well, that it is most pernicious to public men to be considered failing in health:—turkeys are not more unfeeling to a sick brother, than politicians to an ailing statesman: they give out that his head is touched, and see paralysis and epilepsy in every speech and every despatch. The time, too, nearly ripe for his great schemes, made it doubly necessary that he should exert himself, and prevent being shelved with a plausible excuse of tender compassion for his infirmities. As soon, therefore, as he learned that Legard had left Paris, he thought himself safe for awhile in that quarter, and surrendered his thoughts wholly to his ambitious projects. Perhaps, too, with the susceptible vanity of a middle-aged man, who has had his *bonnes fortunes*, Lumley deemed, with Rousseau, that a lover, pale and haggard—just raised from the bed of suffering—is more interesting to friendship, than attractive to love. He and Rousseau were, I believe, both mistaken; but that is a matter of opinion: they both thought very coarsely of women,—one, from having no sentiment, and the other, from having a sentiment that was but a disease. At length, just as Lumley was sufficiently recovered to quit his house—to appear at his office, and declare that his illness had wonderfully improved his constitution,—intelligence from Paris, the more startling from being wholly unexpected, reached him. From Caroline he learned that Maltravers had proposed to Evelyn, and been accepted. From Maltravers himself he heard the confirmation of the news. The last letter was short, but kind and manly. He addressed Lord Vargrave as Evelyn's guardian; slightly alluded to the scruples he had entertained, till Lord Vargrave's suit was broken off; and feeling the subject too delicate for a letter, expressed a desire to confer with Lumley respecting Evelyn's wishes as to certain arrangements in her property.

And for this was it that Lumley had toiled! for this had he visited Lisle Court! and for this had he been stricken down to the bed of pain! Was it only to make his old rival the purchaser, if he so pleased it, of the possessions of his own family? Lumley thought at that moment less of Evelyn than of Lisle Court. As he woke from the stupor and the first fit of rage into which these epistles cast him, the recollection of the story he had heard from Mr. Onslow flashed across him. Were his suspicions true, what a secret he would possess! How fate might yet befriend him! Not a moment was to be lost. Weak, suffering

as he still was, he ordered his carriage, and hastened down to Mrs. Leslie.

In the interview that took place, he was careful not to alarm her into discretion. He managed the conference with his usual consummate dexterity. He did not appear to believe that there had been any actual connection between Alice and the supposed Butler. He began by simply asking whether Alice had ever, in early life, been acquainted with a person of that name, and when residing in the neighbordood of * * * *? The change of countenance — the surprised start of Mrs. Leslie—convinced him that his suspicions were true.

"And why do you ask, my lord?" said the old lady. "Is it to ascertain this point that you have done me the honor to visit me?"

"Not exactly, my dear madam," said Lumley, smiling. "But I am going to C * * * * on business; and besides, that I wished to give an account of your health to Evelyn, whom I shall shortly see at Paris, I certainly did desire to know whether it would be any gratification to Lady Vargrave, for whom I have the deepest regard, to renew her acquaintance with the said Mr. Butler!"

"What does your lordship know of him?—What is he?—who is he?"

"Ah, my dear lady, you turn the tables on me, I see—for my one question you would give me fifty. But, seriously, before I answer you, you must tell me whether Lady Vargrave does know a gentleman of that name; yet, indeed, to save trouble, I may as well inform you, that I know it was under that name that she resided at C * * * *, when my poor uncle first made her acquaintance. What I ought to ask, is this,—supposiug Mr. Butler be still alive, and a gentleman of character and fortune, would it please Lady Vargrave to meet with him once more?"

"I cannot tell you," said Mrs. Leslie, sinking back in her chair, much embarrassed.

"Enough, I shall not stir further in the matter. Glad to see you looking so well. Fine place—beautiful trees. Any commands at C * * * *, or any message for Evelyn?"

Lumley rose to depart.

"Stay," said Mrs. Leslie, recalling all the pining, restless, untiring love that Lady Var- had manifested towards the lost, and feeling that she ought not to sacrifice to slight scruples the chance of happiness for her friend's future years,—"stay—I think this question you should address to Lady Vargrave or shall I?"

"As you will—perhaps *I* had better write. Good-day," and Vargrave hurried away.

He had satisfied himself, but he had another yet to satisfy,—and that, from certain reasons known but to himself, without bringing the third person in contact with Lard Vargrave. On arriving at C * * * * he wrote therefore, to Lady Vargrave as follows:—

"My Dear Friend,

"Do not think me impertinent or intrusive—but you know me too well for that. A gentleman of the name of Butler is exceedingly anxious to ascertain if you once lived near * * * *, in a pretty little cottage,—Dove, or Dale, or Dell Cottage (some such appellation),—and if you remember a person of his name?—Should you care to give a reply to these queries, send me a line addressed to London, which I shall get on my way to Paris.

"Yours most truly,
"Vargrave."

As soon as he had concluded and despatched this letter, Vargrave wrote to Mr. Winsley as follows:—

"My Dear Sir,

"I am so unwell, as to be unable to call on you, or even to see any one, however agreeable (nay, the more agreeable the more exciting!) I hope, however, to renew our personal acquaintance before quitting C ****. Meanwhile, oblige me with a line to say if I did not understand you to signify that you could, if necessary, prove that Lady Vargrave once resided in this town as Mrs. Butler, a very short time before she married my uncle, under the name of Cameron, in Devonshire; and had she not also at the time a little girl—an infant, or nearly so,—who must necessarily be the young lady who is my uncle's heiress, Miss Evelyn Cameron? My reason for thus troubling you is obvious. As Miss Cameron's guardian, I have very shortly to wind up certain affairs connected with my uncle's will; and, what is more, there is some property bequeathed by the late Mr. Butler, which may make it necessary to prove identity.

"Truly yours,
"Vargrave."

The answer to the latter communication ran thus:—

"My Lord,

"I am very sorry to hear your lordship is so unwell, and will pay my respects to-morrow. I certainly can swear that the present Lady Vargrave was the Mrs. Butler who resided at C * * * *, and taught music. And as the child with her was of the same sex, and about the same age, as Miss Cameron, there can, I should think, be no difficulty in establishing the identity between that young lady and the child Lady Var-

grave had by her first husband, Mr. Butler; but of this, of course, I cannot speak.

"I have the honor,
"Etc., etc."

The next morning Vargrave despatched a note to Mr. Winsley, saying that his health required him to return to town immediately, —and to town, in fact, he hastened. The day after his arrival, he received, in a hurried hand—strangely blurred and blotted, perhaps by tears,—this short letter:—

"For Heaven's sake, tell me what you mean! Yes —yes,—I did once reside at Dale Cottage—I did know one of the name of Butler! Has *he* discovered the name *I* bear? Where is he? I implore you to write, or let me see you before you leave England!

"ALICE VARGRAVE."

Lumley smiled triumphantly, when he read, and carefully put up, this letter.

"I must now amuse and put her off—at all events for the present."

In answer to Lady Vargrave's letter, he wrote a few lines to say, that he had only heard through a third person (a lawyer) of a Mr. Butler residing somewhere abroad, who had wished these inquiries to be made—that he believed it only related to some disposition of property—that, *perhaps*, the Mr. Butler who made the inquiry was heir to the Mr. Butler she had known—that he could learn nothing else at present, as the purport of her reply must be sent abroad; the lawyer would or could say nothing more—that directly he received a further communication it should be despatched to her—that he was most affectionately and most truly hers.

The rest of that morning Vargrave devoted to Lord Saxingham and his allies; and declaring, and believing, that he should not be long absent at Paris, he took an early dinner, and was about once more to commit himself to the risks of travel, when, as he crossed the hall, Mr. Douce came hastily upon him.

"My lord—my lord—I must have a word with your l-l-lordship;—you are going to—that is—" (and the little man looked frightened) "you intend to—to go to—that is—ab-ab-ab——"

"Not abscond, Mr. Douce—come into the library: I am in a great hurry, but I have always time for *you*—what's the matter?"

"Why, then, my lord,—I—I have heard nothing m-m-more from your lordship about the pur-pur——"

"Purchase?—I am going to Paris, to settle all particulars with Miss Cameron; tell the lawyers so."

"May—may—we draw out the money to —to—show—that—that we are in earnest? otherwise I fear—that is, I suspect—I mean I know, that Colonel Maltravers will be off the bargain."

"Why, Mr. Douce, really I must just see my ward first! but you shall hear from me in a day or two;—and the ten thousand pounds I owe you!"

"Yes, indeed, the ten—ten—ten—my partner is very——"

"Anxious for it, no doubt!—my compliments to him—God bless you!—take care of yourself—must be off to save the packet;" and Vargrave hurried away, muttering "Heaven sends money, and the devil sends duns!"

Douce gasped like a fish for breath, as his eyes followed the rapid steps of Vargrave; and there was an angry scowl of disappointment on his small features. Lumley, by this time, seated in his carriage, and wrapped up in his cloak, had forgotten the creditor's existence, and whispered to his aristocratic secretary, as he bent his head out of the carriage window, "I have told Lord Saxingham to despatch you to me, if there is any—the least —necessity for me in London. I leave you behind, Howard, because, your sister being at court, and your cousin with our notable premier, you will find out every change in the wind—you understand. And I say, Howard —don't think I forget your kindness!—you know that no man ever served me in vain!— Oh, there's that horrid little Douce behind you!—tell them to drive on!"

CHAPTER II.

* * "Heard you that?
What prodigy of horror is disclosing?"
—LILLO: *Fatal Curiosity.*

THE unhappy companion of Cesarini's flight was soon discovered and recaptured; but all seach for Cesarini himself proved ineffectual, not only in the neighborhood of St. Cloud, but in the surrounding country and in Paris. The

only comfort was in thinking that his watch would at least preserve him for some time from the horrors of want; and that, by the sale of the trinket, he might be traced. The police, too, were set at work—the vigilant police of Paris! Still day rolled on day, and no tidings. The secret of the escape was carefully concealed from Teresa; and public cares were a sufficient excuse for the gloom on De Montaigne's brow.

Evelyn heard from Maltravers, with mingled emotions of compassion, grief, and awe, the gloomy tale connected with the history of the maniac. She wept for the fate of Florence—she shuddered at the curse that had fallen on Cesarini; and perhaps Maltravers grew dearer to her from the thought, that there was so much in the memories of the past that needed a comforter and a soother.

They returned to Paris, affianced and plighted lovers; and then it was that Evelyn sought carefully and resolutely to banish from her mind all recollection, all regret, of the absent Legard: she felt the solemnity of the trust confided in her, and she resolved that no thought of hers should ever be of a nature to gall the generous and tender spirit that had confided its life of life to her care. The influence of Maltravers over her increased in their new and more familiar position; and yet still it partook too much of veneration—too little of passion; but that might be her innocence and youth. He, at least, was sensible of no want—she had chosen him from the world: and, fastidious as he deemed himself, he reposed, without a doubt, on the security of her faith. None of those presentiments which had haunted him when first betrothed to Florence disturbed him now. The affection of one so young and so guileless, seemed to bring back to him all his own youth—we are ever young while the young can love us! Suddenly, too, the world took, to his eyes, a brighter and fairer aspect—Hope, born again, reconciled him to his career, and to his race! The more he listened to Evelyn, the more he watched every evidence of her docile but generous nature, the more he felt assured that he had found, at last, a heart suited to his own. Her beautiful serenity of temper, cheerful, yet never fitful or unquiet, gladdened him with its insensible contagion.

To be with Evelyn, was like basking in the sunshine of some happy sky! It was an inexpressible charm to one wearied with "the hack sights and sounds" of this jaded world—to watch the ever fresh and sparkling thoughts and fancies which came from a soul so new to life! It enchanted one, painfully fastidious in what relates to the true nobility of character, that, however various the themes discussed, no low or mean thought ever sullied those beautiful lips. It was not the mere innocence of inexperience, but the moral incapability of guile, that charmed him in the companion he had chosen on his path to Eternity! He was also delighted to notice Evelyn's readiness of resources: she had that faculty, without which woman has no independence from the world, no pledge that domestic retirement will not soon languish into wearisome monotony—the faculty of making trifles contribute to occupation or amusement; she was easily pleased, and yet she so soon reconciled herself to disappointment. He felt, and chid his own dullness for not feeling it before—that, young and surpassingly lovely as she was, she required no stimulant from the heated pursuits and the hollow admiration of the crowd.

"Such," thought he, "are the natures that alone can preserve through years the poetry of the first passionate illusion—that can alone render wedlock the seal that confirms affection, and not the mocking ceremonial that vainly consecrates its grave!"

Maltravers, as we have seen, formally wrote to Lumley some days after their return to Paris. He would have written also to Lady Vargrave—but Evelyn thought it best to prepare her mother by a letter from herself.

Miss Cameron now wanted but a few weeks to the age of eighteen, at which she was to be the sole mistress of her own destiny. On arriving at that age, the marriage was to take place. Valerie heard with sincere delight of the new engagement her friend had formed. She eagerly sought every opportunity to increase her intimacy with Evelyn, who was completely won by her graceful kindness;—the result of Valerie's examination was, that she did not wonder at the passionate love of Maltravers, but that her deep knowledge of the human heart (that knowledge so remarkable in the women of her country!) made her doubt how far it was adequately returned—

how far Evelyn deceived herself. Her first satisfaction became mingled with anxiety, and she relied more for the future felicity of her friend on Evelyn's purity of thought and general tenderness of heart, than on the exclusiveness and ardor of her love. Alas! few at eighteen are not too young for the irrevocable step—and Evelyn was younger than her years! One evening, at Madame de Ventadour's, Maltravers asked Evelyn if she had yet heard from Lady Vargrave. Evelyn expressed her surprise that she had not, and the conversation fell, as was natural, upon Lady Vargrave herself. "Is she as fond of music as you are?" asked Maltravers.

"Yes, indeed, I think so—and of the songs of a certain person in particular; they always had for her an indescribable charm. Often have I heard her say, that to read your writings was like talking to an early friend. Your name and genius seemed to make her solitary connection with the great world. Nay—but you will not be angry—I half think it was her enthusiasm, so strange and rare, that first taught me interest in yourself."

"I have a double reason, then, for loving your mother," said Maltravers, much pleased and flattered. "And does she not like Italian music?"

"Not much; she prefers some rather old-fashioned German airs, very simple, but very touching."

"My own early passion," said Maltravers, more and more interested.

"But there are, also, one or two English songs which I have occasionally, but very seldom, heard her sing. One in especial affects her so deeply, even when she plays the air, that I have always attached to it a certain mysterious sanctity. I should not like to sing it before a crowd; but to-morrow, when you call on me, and we are alone——"

"Ah, to-morrow I will not fail to remind you."

Their conversation ceased; yet, somehow or other, that night when he retired to rest, the recollection of it haunted Maltravers. He felt a vague, unaccountable curiosity respecting this secluded and solitary mother; all concerning her early fate seemed so wrapt in mystery. Cleveland, in reply to his letter, had informed him that all inquiries respecting the birth and first marriage of Lady Vargrave had failed. Evelyn evidently knew but little of either, and he felt a certain delicacy in pressing questions which might be ascribed to the inquisitiveness of a vulgar family pride. Moreover, lovers have so much to say to each other, that he had not yet found time to talk at length to Evelyn about third persons. He slept ill that night—dark and boding dreams disturbed his slumber. He rose late and dejected by presentiments he could not master: his morning meal was scarcely over, and he had already taken his hat to go to Evelyn's for comfort and sunshine, when the door opened, and he was surprised by the entrance of Lord Vargrave.

Lumley seated himself with a formal gravity very unusual to him; and, as if anxious to waive unnecessary explanations, began as follows with a serious and impressive voice and aspect:—

"Maltravers, of late years we have been estranged from each other; I do not presume to dictate to you your friendships or your dislikes. Why this estrangement has happened, you alone can determine. For my part, I am conscious of no offence; that which I was I am still. It is you who have changed. Whether it be the difference of our political opinions, or any other and more secret cause, I know not. I lament, but it is now too late to attempt to remove it. If you suspect me of ever seeking, or even wishing, to sow dissension between yourself and my ill-fated cousin, now no more, you are mistaken. I ever sought the happiness and the union of you both. And yet, Maltravers, you then came between me and an early and cherished dream. But I suffered in silence; my course was at least disinterested, perhaps generous: let it pass. A second time you cross my path—you win from me a heart I had long learned to consider mine. You have no scruple of early friendship—you have no forbearance towards acknowledged and affianced ties. You are my rival with Evelyn Cameron, and your suit has prospered."

"Vargrave," said Maltravers, "you have spoken frankly; and I will reply with an equal candor. A difference of tastes, tempers, and opinions, led us long since into opposite paths. I am one who cannot disunite public morality from private virtue. From motives best known to you, but which I say openly I hold to have

been those of interest or ambition,—you did not change your opinions (there is no sin in that), but retaining them in private, professed others in public, and played with the destinies of mankind, as if they were but counters, to mark a mercenary game. This led me to examine your character with more searching eyes; and I found it one I could no longer trust. With respect to the Dead—let the pall drop over that early grave—I acquit you of all blame. He who sinned has suffered more than would atone the crime! You charge me with my love to Evelyn. Pardon me, but I seduced no affection, I have broken no tie! Not till she was free, in heart and in hand, to choose between us, did I hint at love. Let me think, that a way may be found to soften one portion at least of the disappointment you cannot but feel acutely."

"Stay!" said Lord Vargrave (who, plunged in a gloomy revery, had scarcely seemed to hear the last few sentences of his rival); "stay, Maltravers. Speak not of love to Evelyn!—a horrible foreboding tells me that, a few hours hence, you would rather pluck out your tongue by the roots, than couple the words of love with the thought of that unfortunate girl! Oh, if I were vindictive, what awful triumph would await me now! What retaliation on your harsh judgment, your cold contempt, your momentary and wretched victory over me! Heaven is my witness, that my only sentiment is that of terror and woe! Maltravers, in your earliest youth, did you form connection with one whom they called Alice Darvil?"

"Alice!—merciful Heaven! what of her?"

"Did you never know that the Christian name of Evelyn's mother is Alice?"

"I never asked—I never knew; but it is a common name," faltered Maltravers.

"Listen to me," resumed Vargrave: "with Alice Darvil you lived in the neighborhood of ****, did you not?"

"Go on—go on!"

"You took the name of Butler—by that name Alice Darvil was afterwards known in the town in which my uncle resided—(there are gaps in the history that I cannot of my own knowledge fill up)—she taught music—my uncle became enamoured of her—but he was vain and worldly. She removed into Devonshire, and he married her there, under the name of Cameron, by which name he hoped to conceal from the world the lowness of her origin, and the humble calling she had followed.—— Hold! do not interrupt me. Alice had one daughter, as was supposed, by a former marriage—that daughter was the offspring of him whose name she bore—yes, of the false Butler!—that daughter is Evelyn Cameron!"

"Liar!—devil!" cried Maltravers, springing to his feet, as if a shot had pierced his heart. "Proofs—proofs!"

"Will these suffice?" said Vargrave: as he drew forth the letters of Winsley and Lady Vargrave. Maltravers took them, but it was some moments before he could dare to read. He supported himself with difficulty from falling to the ground; there was a gurgle in his throat, like the sound of the death-rattle: at last he read, and dropped the letters from his hand.

"Wait me here," he said, very faintly, and moved mechanically to the door.

"Hold!" said Lord Vargrave, laying his hand upon Ernest's arm. "Listen to me for Evelyn's sake—for her mother's. You are about to seek Evelyn—be it so! I know that you possess the god-like gift of self-control. You will not suffer her to learn that her mother has done that which dishonors alike mother and child? You will not consummate your wrong to Alice Darvil, by robbing her of the fruit of a life of penitence and remorse? You will not unveil her shame to her own daughter? Convince yourself, and master yourself while you do so!"

"Fear me not," said Maltravers, with a terrible smile; "I will not afflict my conscience with a double curse. As I have sowed, so must I reap. Wait me here!"

CHAPTER III.

* * * "Misery,
That gathers force each moment as it rolls,
And must, at last overwhelm me."
—LILLO. *Fatal Curiosity.*

MALTRAVERS found Evelyn alone; she turned towards him with her usual sweet smile of welcome: but the smile vanished at once, as her eyes met his changed and working countenance; cold drops stood upon the rigid

and marble brow—the lips writhed as if in bodily torture—the muscles of the face had fallen, and there was a wildness which appalled her in the fixed and feverish brightness of the eyes.

"You are ill, Ernest,—dear Ernest, you are ill,—your look freezes me!"

"Nay, Evelyn," said Maltravers, recovering himself by one of those efforts of which men who have *suffered without sympathy* are alone capable;—"nay, I am better now; I have been ill—very ill—but I am better!"

"Ill! and I not to know of it!" She attempted to take his hand as she spoke. Maltravers recoiled.

"It is fire!—it burns!—avaunt!" he cried, franctically. "Oh Heaven! spare me, spare me!"

Evelyn was now seriously alarmed; she gazed on him with the tenderest compassion. Was this one of those moody and overwhelming paroxysms to which it had been whispered abroad that he was subject? Strange as it may seem, despite her terror, he was dearer to her in that hour—as she believed, of gloom and darkness—that in all the glory of majestic intellect, or all the blandishments of his soft address.

"What has happened to you?" she said, approaching him again; "have you seen Lord Vargrave? I know that he has arrived, for his servant has been here to say so; has he uttered any thing to distress you? or has——" (she added falteringly and timidly)—"has poor Evelyn offended you? Speak to me,—only speak!"

Maltravers turned, and his face was now calm and serene: save by its extreme and almost ghastly paleness, no trace of the hell within him could be discovered.

"Pardon me," said he, gently, "I know not this morning what I say or do; think not of it—think not of me—it will pass away when I hear your voice."

"Shall I sing to you the words I spoke of last night?—see, I have them ready—I know them by heart; but I thought you might like to read them, they are so full of simple but deep feeling."

Maltravers took the song from her hands, and bent over the paper; at first, the letters seemed dim and indistinct, for there was a mist before his eyes; but at last a chord of memory was struck—he recalled the words: they were some of those he had composed for Alice in the first days of their delicious intercourse—links of the golden chain, in which he had sought to bind the spirit of knowledge to that of love.

"And from whom," said he, in a faint voice, as he calmly put down the verses,—"from whom did your mother learn these words?"

"I know not; some dear friend, years ago, composed, and gave them to her. It must have been one very dear to her, to judge by the effect they still produce."

"Think you," said Maltravers, in a hollow voice—"think you IT WAS YOUR FATHER?"

"My father!—she never speaks of him!—I have been early taught to shun all allusion to his memory. My father!—it is probable—yes! it may have been my father; whom else could she have loved so fondly?"

There was a long silence; Evelyn was the first to break it.

"I have heard from my mother, to-day, Ernest; her letter alarms me—I scarce know why?"

"Ay!—and how—"

"It is hurried and incoherent—almost wild: she says she has learned some intelligence that has unsettled and unstrung her mind: she has requested me to inquire if any one I am acquainted with has heard of, or met abroad, some person of the name of Butler. You start!—have you known one of that name?"

"I!—did your mother never allude to that name before?"

"Never!—and yet, once I remember—"

"What?"

"That I was reading an account in the papers of the sudden death of some Mr. Butler; and her agitation made a powerful and strange impression upon me—in fact, she fainted, and seemed almost delirious when she recovered; she would not rest till I had completed the account, and when I came to the particulars of his age, etc., (he was old, I think) she clasped her hands, and wept; but they seemed tears of joy. The name is so common—whom, of that name have you known?"

"It is no matter! Is that your mother's letter?—is that her handwriting?"

"Yes;" and Evelyn gave the letter to Maltravers. He glanced over the characters: he

had once or twice seen Lady Vargrave's handwriting before, and had recognized no likeness between that handwriting and such early specimens of Alice's art as he had witnessed so many years ago, but now, "trifles light as air" had grown "confirmation strong as proof of Holy Writ,"—he thought he detected Alice in every line of the hurried and blotted scroll; and when his eye rested on the words—"Your affectionate MOTHER, *Alice!*" his blood curdled in his veins.

"It is strange!" said he, still struggling for self-composure; "strange that I never thought of asking her name before:—Alice! her name is Alice?"

"A sweet name, is it not? it accords so well with her simple character—how you would love her!"

As she said this, Evelyn turned to Maltravers with enthusiasm, and again she was startled by his aspect; for again it was haggard, distorted, and convulsed.

"Oh! if you love me," she cried, "do send immediately for advice!—And yet, is it illness, Ernest, or is it some grief that you hide from me?"

"It is illness, Evelyn," said Maltravers, rising; and his knees knocked together. "I am not fit even for your companionship—I will go home."

"And send instantly for advice?"

"Ay! it waits me there already."

"Thank Heaven! and you will write to me—one little word—to relieve me? I am so uneasy!'"

"I will write to you."

"This evening?"

"Ay!"

"Now go—I will not detain you."

He walked slowly to the door, but when he reached it he turned, and catching her anxious gaze, he opened his arms; overpowered with strange fear and affectionate sympathy, she burst into passionate tears; and, surprised out of the timidity and reserve which had hitherto characterized her pure and meek attachment to him, she fell on his breast, and sobbed aloud. Maltravers raised his hands, and, placing them solemnly on her young head, his lips muttered as if in prayer. He paused, and strained her to his heart;—but he shunned that parting kiss, which, hitherto, he had so fondly sought. That embrace was one of agony, and not of rapture;—and yet Evelyn dreamt not that he designed it for the last!

Maltravers re-entered the room in which he had left Lord Vargrave, who still awaited his return.

He walked up to Lumley and held out his hand. "You have saved me from a dreadful crime—from an everlasting remorse—I thank you!"

Hardened and frigid as his nature was, Lumley was touched; the movement of Maltravers took him by surprise. "It has been a dreadful duty, Ernest," said he, pressing the hand he held; "but to come, too, from *me*—your rival!"

"Proceed—proceed, I pray you—explain all this—Yet explanation!—what do I want to know?—Evelyn is my daughter—Alice's child! For Heaven's sake, give me hope,—say it is not so—say that she is Alice's child, but not *mine!* Father, father!—and they call it a holy name—it is a horrible one!"

"Compose yourself my dear friend: recollect what you have escaped! You will recover this shock;—time—travel——"

"Peace, man,—peace! Now then I am calm! When Alice left me she had no child. I knew not that she bore within her the pledge of our ill-omened and erring love. Verily, the sins of my youth have risen against me; and the curse has come home to roost!"

"I cannot explain to you all details."

"But why not have told me of this? Why not have warned me—why not have said to me, when my heart could have been satisfied by so sweet a tie—'Thou hast a daughter—thou art not desolate?' Why reserve the knowledge of the blessing until it has turned to poison? Fiend that you are! you have waited this hour to gloat over the agony from which, a word from you—a year, nay, a month ago—a little month ago, might have saved me and her!"

Maltravers, as he spoke, approached Vargrave, with eyes sparkling with fierce passion; his hand clenched, his form dilated, the veins on his forehead swelled like cords. Lumley, brave as he was, recoiled.

"I knew not of this secret," said he, deprecatingly, "till a few days before I came hither; and I came hither at once to disclose it to you. Will you listen to me? I knew that my uncle

had married a person much beneath him in rank; but he was guarded and cautious, and I knew no more, except that by a first husband that lady had one daughter,—Evelyn. A chain of accidents suddenly acquainted me with the rest." Here Vargrave pretty faithfully repeated what he had learned from the brewer at C * * * * *, and from Mr. Onslow; but when he came to the tacit confirmation of all his suspicions, received from Mrs. Leslie, he greatly exaggerated, and greatly distorted the account. "Judge, then," concluded Lumley, "of the horror with which I heard that you had declared an attachment to Evelyn, and that it was returned. Ill as I was, I hastened hither: you know the rest:—are you satisfied?"

"I will go to Alice!—I will learn from her own lips—yet how can I meet her again? How say to her, 'I have taken from thee thy last hope—I have broken thy child's heart?'"

"Forgive me, but I should confess to you, that, from all that I can learn from Mrs. Leslie, Lady Vargrave has but one prayer—one hope in life—that she may never again meet with her betrayer. You may, indeed, in her own letter, perceive how much she is terrified by the thought of your discovering her. She has, at length, recovered peace of mind, and tranquillity of conscience. She shrinks with dread from the prospect of ever again encountering one once so dear, now associated in her mind with recollections of guilt and sorrow. More than this, she is sensitively alive to the fear of shame, the dread of detection. If ever her daughter were to know her sin, it would be to her as a death-blow. Yet, in her nervous state of health, her ever quick and uncontrollable feelings, if you were to meet her, she would disguise nothing, conceal nothing. The veil would be torn aside; the menials in her own house would tell the tale, and curiosity circulate, and scandal blacken, the story of her early errors. No, Maltravers, at least wait awhile before you see her; wait till her mind can be prepared for such an interview, till precautions can be taken, till you yourself are in a calmer state of mind."

Maltravers fixed his piercing eyes on Lumley while he thus spoke, and listened in deep attention.

"It matters not," said he, after a long pause, "whether these be your real reasons for wishing to defer or prevent a meeting between Alice and myself. The affliction that has come upon me bursts with too clear and scorching a blaze of light, for me to see any chance of escape or mitigation. Even if Evelyn were the daughter of Alice by another, she would be for ever separated from me.—The mother and the child! there is a kind of incest even in that thought! But such an alleviation of my anguish is forbidden to my reason. No, poor Alice, I will not disturb the repose thou hast won at last! Thou shall never have the grief to know that our error has brought upon thy lover so black a doom! All is over! the world never shall find me again. Nothing is left for me but the desert and the grave!"

"Speak not so, Ernest," said Lord Vargrave, soothingly: "a little while and you will recover this blow: your control over passion has, even in youth, inspired me with admiration and surprise; and, now, in calmer years, and with such incentives to self-mastery, your triumph will come sooner than you think. Evelyn, too, is so young; she has not known you long; perhaps her love, after all, is that caused by some mystic, but innocent working of nature, and she would rejoice to call you 'father.' Happy years are yet in store for you."

Maltravers did not listen to these vain and hollow consolations. With his head drooping on his bosom, his whole form unnerved, the large tears rolling unheeded down his cheeks, he seemed the very picture of the broken-hearted man, whom fate never again could raise from despair. He—who had, for years, so cased himself in pride, on whose very front was engraved the victory over passion and misfortune, whose step had trod the earth in the royalty of the Conqueror;—the veriest slave that crawls bore not a spirit more humbled, fallen, or subdued! He who had looked with haughty eyes on the infirmities of others, who had disdained to serve his race, because of their human follies and partial frailties—*he* even *he*—the Pharisee of Genius—had but escaped by a chance, and by the hand of the man he suspected and despised, from a crime at which nature herself recoils,—which all law, social and divine, stigmatizes as inexpiable—which the sternest imagination of the very heathen had invented as the gloomiest catastrophe that can befall the wisdom and the

pride of mortals! But one step farther, and the fabulous Œdipus had not been more accursed!

Such thougsts as these, unformed, confused, but strong enough to bow him to the dust, passed through the mind of this wretched man. He had been familiar with grief, he had been dull to enjoyment; sad and bitter memories had consumed his manhood; but pride had been left him still! and he had dared in his secret heart to say, "I can defy Fate!" Now the bolt had fallen—Pride was shattered into fragments—Self-abasement was his companion—Shame sate upon his prostrate soul. The Future had no hope left in store. Nothing was left for him but to die!

Lord Vargrave gazed at him in real pain, in sincere compassion; for his nature, wily, deceitful, perfidious, though it was, had cruelty only so far as was necessary to the unrelenting execution of his schemes. No pity could swerve him from a purpose· but he had enough of the *man* within him to feel pity not the less, even for his own victim! At length Maltravers lifted his head, and waved his hand gently to Lord Vargrave.

"All is now explained," said he, in a feeble voice; "our interview is over. I must be alone; I have yet to collect my reason, to commune calmly and deliberately with myself;—I have to write to her—to invent—to lie—I, who believed I could never, never utter, even to an enemy, what was false! And I must not soften the blow to her. I must not utter a word of love—love, it is incest! I must endeavor brutally to crush out the very affection I created! She must hate me—oh, *teach* her to hate me!—Blacken my name, traduce my motives,—let her believe them levity or perfidy, what you will. So will she forget me the sooner; so will she the easier bear the sorrow which the father brings upon the child. And *she* has not sinned! O, Heaven, the sin was mine! Let my punishment be a sacrifice that thou wilt accept for her?"

Lord Vargrave attempted again to console; but this time the words died upon his lips. His arts failed him. Maltravers turned impatiently away, and pointed to the door.

"I will see you again," said he, "before I quit Paris: leave your address below."

Vargrave was not, perhaps, unwilling to terminate a scene so painful: he muttered a few incoherent words, and abruptly withdrew. He heard the door locked behind him as he departed. Ernest Maltravers was alone!—what a solitude!

CHAPTER IV.

"Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold."—*Hamlet.*

Letter from Ernest Maltravers to Evelyn Cameron.

"EVELYN!

"All that you have read of faithlessness and perfidy will seem tame to you when compared with that conduct which you are doomed to meet from me. We must part, and for ever. We have seen each other for the last time. It is bootless even to ask the cause. Believe that I am fickle, false, heartless—that a whim has changed me, if you will. My resolve is unalterable. We meet no more, even as friends. I do not ask you either to forgive or to remember me. Look on me as one wholly unworthy even of resentment! Do not think that I write this in madness, or in fever, or excitement. Judge me not by my seeming illness this morning. I invent no excuse, no extenuation for my broken faith and perjured vows. Calmly, coldly, and deliberately I write: and thus writing, I renounce your love.

"This language is wanton cruelty—it is fiendish insult—is it not, Evelyn? Am I not a villain? Are you not grateful for your escape? Do you not look on the past with a shudder at the precipice on which you stood?

"I have done with this subject, I turn to another. We are parted, Evelyn, and for ever. Do not fancy—I repeat, do not fancy that there is any error, any strange infatuation on my mind, that there is any possibility that the sentence can be annulled. It were almost easier to call the dead from the grave than bring us again together, as we were and as we hoped to be. Now that you are convinced of that truth, learn, as soon as you have recovered the first shock of knowing how much wickedness there is on earth—learn to turn to the future for happier and more suitable ties than those you could have formed with me. You are very young—in youth our first impressions are lively but evanescent—you will wonder hereafter at having fancied you loved me. Another and a fairer image will replace mine. This is what I desire and pray for. *As soon as I learn that you love another, that you are wedded to another, I will reappear in the world; till then I am a wanderer and an exile. Your hand alone can efface from my brow the brand of Cain!* When I am gone, Lord Vargrave will probably renew his suit. I would rather you married one of your own years—one whom you could love fondly—one who would chase away every remembrance of the wretch who now forsakes you. But perhaps I have mistaken Lord Vargrave's

character—perhaps he may be worthier of you than I deemed (*I* who set up for the censor of other men!)—perhaps he may both win and deserve your affection.

"Evelyn, farewell—God, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, will watch over you!

'ERNEST MALTRAVERS."

CHAPTER V.

"Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
The fatal shadows that walk by us still."
—JOHN FLETCHER.

THE next morning came; the carriage was at the door of Maltravers, to bear him away he cared not whither. Where could he fly from memory? He had just despatched the letter to Evelyn—a letter studiously written for the object of destroying all the affection to which he had so fondly looked as the last charm of life. He was now only waiting for Vargrave, to whom he had sent, and who hastened to obey the summons.

When Lumley arrived, he was shocked at the alteration which a single night had effected in the appearance of Maltravers; but he was surprised and relieved to find him calm and self-possessed.

"Vargrave," said Maltravers, "whatever our past coldness, henceforth I owe to you an eternal gratitude; and henceforth this awful secret makes between us an indissoluble bond. If I have understood you rightly, neither Alice nor other living being than yourself know that in me, Ernest Maltravers, stands the guilty object of Alice's first love. Let that secret still be kept; relieve Alice's mind from the apprehension of learning that the man who betrayed her yet lives: he will not live long! I leave time and method of explanation to your own judgment and acuteness. Now for Evelyn." Here Maltravers stated generally the tone of the letter he had written. Vargrave listened thoughtfully.

"Maltravers," said he, "it is right to try first the effect of your letter. But if it fail—if it only serve to inflame the imagination and excite the interest—if Evelyn still continue to love you—if that love preys upon her—if it should undermine health and spirit—if it should destroy her?"——

Maltravers groaned. Lumley proceeded, "I say this not to wound you, but to provide against all circumstances. I too have spent the night in revolving what is best to be done in such a case; and this is the plan I have formed. Let us, if need be, tell the truth to Evelyn, robbing the truth only of its shame. Nay, nay, listen. Why not say that, under a borrowed name, and in the romance of early youth, you knew and loved Alice (though in innocence and honor): your tender age—the difference of rank—forbade your union. Her father, discovering your clandestine correspondence, suddenly removed her from the country, and destroyed all clue for your inquires. You lost sight of each other—each was taught to believe the other dead Alice was compelled by her father to marry Mr. Cameron; and, after his death, her poverty and her love for her only child induced her to accept my uncle. You have now learned all—have learned that Evelyn is the daughter of your first love—the daughter of one who adores you still, and whose life your remembrance has, for so many years, embittered. Evelyn herself will at once comprehend all the scruples of a delicate mind;—Evelyn herself will recoil from the thought of making the child the rival to the mother. She will understand why you have flown from her; she will sympathize with your struggles: she will recall the constant melancholy of Alice; she will hope that the ancient love may be renewed, and efface all grief; Generosity and Duty alike will urge her to conquer her own affection! And hereafter, when time has restored you both, father and child may meet with such sentiments as father and child may own!"

Maltravers was silent for some minutes; at length he said abruptly, 'And you really loved her, Vargrave?—you love her still?—your dearest care must be her welfare."

"It is!—indeed, it is!"

"Then I must trust to your discretion; I can have no other confidant; I myself am not fit to judge. My mind is darkened—you may be right—I think so."

"One word more—she may discredit my tale if unsupported. Will you write one line to me, to say that I am authorized to reveal the secret, and that it is known only to me?

I will not use it unless I should think it absolutely required."

Hastily and mechanically Maltravers wrote a few words to the effect of what Lumley had suggested. "I will inform you," he said to Vargrave as he gave him the paper, "of whatever spot may become my asylum; and you can communicate to me all that I dread and long to hear; but let no man know the refuge of despair!"

There was positively a tear in Vargrave's cold eye; the only tear that had glistened there for many years; he paused irresolute, then, advanced, again halted, muttered to himself, and turned aside.

"As for the world," Lumley resumed, after a pause, "your engagement has been public—some public account of its breach must be invented. You have always been considered a proud man; we will say it was low birth on the side of both mother and father (the last only just discovered) that broke off the alliance!"

Vargrave was talking to the deaf: what cared Maltravers for the world? He hastened from the room, threw himself into his carriage, and Vargrave was left to plot, to hope, and aspire!

BOOK TENTH.

Οὖλον Ὄνειρον.—HOMER, 1, 2.

A dream!

CHAPTER I.

"Qualis ubi in lucem coluber
* * Mala gramina pastus." *—VIRGIL.

"Pars minima est ipsa puella sui." †—OVID.

IT would be superfluous, and, perhaps, a sickening task, to detail at length the mode and manner in which Vargrave coiled his snares round the unfortunate girl whom his destiny had marked out for his prey. He was right in foreseeing that, after the first amazement caused by the letter of Maltravers, Evelyn would feel resentment crushed beneath her certainty of his affection; her incredulity at his self-accusations, and her secret conviction that some reverse, some misfortune he was unwilling she should share, was the occasion of his farewell and flight. Vargrave therefore very soon communicated to Evelyn the tale he had suggested to Maltravers. He reminded her of the habitual sorrow, the evidence of which was so visible in Lady Vargrave—of her indifference to the pleasures of the world—of her sensitive shrinking from all recurrence to her early fate. "The secret of this," said he, "is in a youthful and most fervent attachment: your mother loved a young stranger above her in rank, who (his head being full of German romance) was then roaming about the country on pedestrian and adventurous excursions, under the assumed name of Butler.

"By him she was most ardently beloved in return. Her father, perhaps, suspected the rank of her lover, and was fearful of her honor being compromised. He was a strange man, that father! and I know not his real character and motives! but he suddenly withdrew his daughter from the suit and search of her lover—they saw each other no more; her lover mourned her as one dead. In process of time your mother was constrained by her father to marry Mr. Cameron, and was left a widow with an only child—yourself: she was poor—very poor! and her love and anxiety for you at last induced her to listen to the addresses of my late uncle; for your sake she married again—again death dissolved the tie! But still, unceasingly and faithfully, she recalled that first love, the memory of which darkened and embittered all her life—and still she lived upon the hope to meet with the lost again. At last, and most recently, it was my fate to discover that the object of this unconquerable affection lived—was still free in hand if not in heart:—You behold the lover of your mother in Ernest Maltravers! It devolved on me (an invidious—a reluctant duty) to inform Maltravers of the identity of Lady Vargrave with the Alice of his boyish passion! to prove to him her suffering, patient, unsubdued affection; to convince him that the sole hope left to her in life was that of one day or other beholding him once again.

"You know Maltravers—his high-wrought, sensitive, noble character: he recoiled in terror from the thought of making his love to the daughter the fast and bitterest affliction to the mother he had so loved; knowing too how completely that mother had entwined herself round your affections, he shuddered at the pain and self-reproach that would be yours

* As when a snake glides into light, having fed on pernicious pastures.

† The girl is the least part of himself.

when you should discover to whom you had been the rival, and whose the fond hopes and dreams that your fatal beauty had destroyed. Tortured, despairing, and half beside himself, he has fled from this ill-omend passion, and in solitude he now seeks to subdue that passion. Touched by the woe, the grief, of the Alice of his youth, it is his intention, as soon as he can know you restored to happiness and content, to hasten to your mother, and offer his future devotion as the fulfilment of former vows. On you, and you alone, it depends to restore Maltravers to the world,—on you alone it depends to bless the remaining years of the mother who so dearly loves you!"

It may be easily conceived with what sensations of wonder, compassion, and dismay, Evelyn listened to this tale, the progress of which her exclamations—her sobs—often interrupted. She would write instantly to her mother—to Maltravers. Oh! how gladly she could relinquish his suit! How cheerfully promise to rejoice in that desertion which brought happiness to the mother she had so loved!

"Nay," said Vargrave, "your mother must not know, till the intelligence can be breathed by his lips, and softened by his protestations of returning affection, that the mysterious object of her early romance is that Maltravers whose vows have been so lately offered to her own child. Would not such intelligence shock all pride, and destroy all hope? How could she then consent to the sacrifice which Maltravers is prepared to make? No! not till you are another's, not (to use the words of Maltravers) till you are a happy and beloved wife—must your mother receive the returning homage of Maltravers—not till then can she know where that homage has been recently rendered—not till then, can Maltravers feel justified in the atonement he meditates. He is willing to sacrifice himself—he trembles at the thought of sacrificing you! Say nothing to your mother, till, from her own lips, she tells you that she has learned all."

Could Evelyn hesitate?—could Evelyn doubt? To allay the fears, to fulfil the prayers of the man whose conduct appeared so generous—to restore him to peace and the world—above all, to pluck from the heart of that beloved and gentle mother the rankling dart—to shed happiness over her fate—to reunite her with the loved and lost;—what sacrifice too great for this?

Ah! why was Legard absent! Why did she believe him capricious, light, and false? Why had she shut her softest thoughts from her soul? But he—the true lover—was afar, and his true love unknown! and Vargrave the watchful serpent, was at hand.

In a fatal hour, and in the transport of that enthusiasm which inspires alike our more rash and our more sublime deeds—which makes us alike dupes and martyrs—the enthusiasm that tramples upon self, that forfeits all things to a high-wrought zeal for others, Evelyn consented to become the wife of Vargrave! Nor was she at first sensible of the sacrifice—sensible of any thing but the glow of a noble spirit and an approving conscience. Yes, thus, and thus alone, did she obey both duties: that, which she had well-nigh abandoned, to her dead benefactor, and that to the living mother. Afterwards came a dread reaction; and then, at last, that passive and sleep-like resignation, which is Despair under a milder name. Yes—such a lot had been predestined from the first—in vain had she sought to fly it: Fate had overtaken her, and she must submit to the decree!

She was most anxious that the intelligence of the new bond might be transmitted instantly to Maltravers. Vargrave promised, but took care not to perform. He was too acute not to know that, in so sudden a step, Evelyn's motives would be apparent; and his own suit indelicate and ungenerous. He was desirous that Maltravers should learn nothing till the vows had been spoken, and the indissoluble chain forged. Afraid to leave Evelyn, even for a day, afraid to trust her in England to an interview with her mother,—he remained at Paris, and hurried on all the requisite preparations. He sent to Douce, who came in person, with the deeds necessary for the transfer of the money for the purchase of Lisle Court, which was now to be immediately completed. The money was to be lodged in Mr. Douce's bank till the lawyers had concluded their operations; and in a few weeks, when Evelyn had attained the allotted age, Vargrave trusted to see himself lord alike of the betrothed bride, and the hereditary lands, of the crushed Maltravers. He refrained from stating to Evelyn who was the present proprietor

f the estate to become hers; he foresaw all the bjections she would form;—and, indeed, she unable to think, to talk, of such matters. favor she had asked, and it had been nted: that she was to be left unmolested er solitude, till the fatal day. Shut up in lonely room, condemned not to confide her ghts:—to seek for sympathy even in her ther,—the poor girl in vain endeavored to keep up to the tenor of her first enthusiasm, and reconcile herself to a step, which, however, she was heroine enough not to retract or to repent, even while she recoiled from its contemplation.

Lady Doltimore, amazed at what had passed; at the flight of Maltravers; the success of Lumley—unable to account for it, to extort explanation from Vargrave or from Evelyn, was distracted by the fear of some villanous deceit which she could not fathom: —To escape, herself, she plunged yet more eagerly into the gay vortex. Vargrave, suspicious, and fearful of trusting to what she might say in her nervous and excited temper, if removed from his watchful eye, deemed himself compelled to hover round her. His manner, his conduct were most guarded: but Caroline herself, jealous, irritated, unsettled, evinced at times a right both to familiarity and anger, which drew upon her and himself the sly vigilance of slander. Meanwhile Lord Doltimore, though too cold and proud openly to notice what passed around him, seemed disturbed and anxious. His manner to Vargrave was distant; he shunned all *tête-à-têtes* with his wife. Little, however, of this did Lumley heed—a few weeks more, and all would be well and safe. Vargrave did not publish his engagement with Evelyn: he sought carefully to conceal it till the very day was near at hand; but it was whispered abroad;—some laughed —some believed. Evelyn herself was seen nowhere. De Montaigne had, at first, been indignantly incredulous at the report that Maltravers had broken off a connection he had so desired, from a motive so weak and unworthy as that of mere family pride. A letter from Maltravers, who confided to him and Vargrave alone the secret of his retreat, reluctantly convinced him that the wise are but pompous fools! He was angry and disgusted; and still more so, when Valerie and Teresa (for female friends stand by us right or wrong) hinted at excuse other causes lurked behind But his thoughts were much subject by increasing anxiet whose abode and fate still rema ing mystery.

It so happened that Lord Dol had always had a taste for the A que, and who was greatly displeased with his own family-seat, because it was comfortable and modern, fell, from *ennui*, into a habit, fashionable enough at Paris, of buying curiosities and cabinets—high-back chairs, and oak-carvings; —and with this habit returned the desire and the affection for Burleigh. Understanding from Lumley that Maltravers had probably left his native land for ever, he imagined it extremely possible that the latter would now consent to the sale, and he begged Vargrave to forward a letter from him to that effect.

Vargrave made some excuse, for he felt that nothing could be more indelicate than such an application, forwarded through his hands, at such a time; and Doltimore, who had accidentally heard De Montaigne confess that he knew the address of Maltravers, quietly sent his letter to the Frenchman, and, without mentioning its contents, begged him to forward it. De Montaigne did so. Now it is very strange how slight men and slight incidents bear on the great events of life. But that simple letter was instrumental to a new revolution in the strange history of Maltravers.

CHAPTER II.

"Quid frustra simulacra fugacia captas?—
Quod petis est nusquam." *—OVID, *Met.* iii. 432.

To no clime dedicated to the indulgence of majestic griefs, or to the soft melancholy of regret—not to thy glaciers, or thy dark-blue lakes, beautiful Switzerland, Mother of many exiles—nor to thy fairer earth, and gentler Heaven, sweet Italy—fled the agonized Maltravers. Once, in his wanderings, he had chanced to pass by a landscape so steeped in sullen and desolate gloom, that it had made a powerful and uneffaced impression upon

* "Why, in vain, do you catch at fleeting shadows? That which you seek is nowhere.

whenmind: it was admidst those swamps and morasses that formerly surrounded the castle of Gil de Retz, the ambitious Lord, the dreaded Necromancer, who perished at the stake, after a career of such power and splendor as seemed almost to justify the dark belief in his preternatural agencies. *

Here, in a lonely and wretched inn, remote from all other habitations, Maltravers fixed himself. In gentler griefs, there is a sort of luxury in bodily discomfort:—in his inexorable and unmitigated anguish, bodily discomfort was not felt. There is a kind of magnetism in extreme woe, by which the body itself seems laid asleep, and knows no distinction between the bed of Damien and the rose-couch of the Sybarite. He left his carriage and servants at a post-house some miles distant. He came to this dreary abode alone; and in that wintry season, and that most disconsolate scene, his gloomy soul found something congenial, something that did not mock him, in the frowns of the haggard and dismal nature. Vain would it be to describe what he then felt—what he then endured. Suffice it that, through all, the diviner strength of man was not wholly crushed; and that daily, nightly, hourly, he prayed to the Great Comforter to assist him in wrestling against a guilty love. No man struggles so honestly, so ardently as he did, utterly in vain; for in us all, if he would but cherish it, there is a spirit that must rise at last—a crowned, if bleeding conqueror—over Fate and all the Demons!

One day after a prolonged silence from Vargrave, whose letters all breathed comfort and assurance in Evelyn's progressive recovery of spirit and hope, his messenger returned from the post-town with a letter in the hand of De Montaigne. It contained, in a blank envelope (De Montaingne's silence told him how much he had lost in the esteem of his friend), the communication of Lord Doltimore. It ran thus:—

"My dear Sir,

"As I hear that your plans are likely to make you long resident on the Continent, may I again inquire if you would be induced to dispose of Burleigh? I am willing to give more than its real value, and would raise a mortgage on my own property sufficient to pay off, at once, the whole purchase money. Perhaps you may be the more induced to the sale, from the circumstance of having an example in the head of your family; Colonel Maltravers, as I learn through Lord Vargrave, having resolved to dispose of Lisle Court. Waiting your answer,

"I am, dear Sir,
"Truly yours,
"Doltimore."

"Ay," said Maltravers, bitterly, crushing the letter in his hand; "let our name be blotted out from the land, and our hearths pass to the stranger. How could I ever visit again the place where I first saw *her?*"

He resolved at once—he would write to England, and place the matter in the hands of agents. This was but a short-lived diversion to his thoughts, and their cloudy darkness soon gathered round him again.

What I am now about to relate may appear, to a hasty criticism, to savor of the Supernatural; but it is easily accounted for by ordinary agencies, and it is strictly to the letter of the truth.

In his sleep, that night, a Dream appeared to Maltravers. He thought he was alone in the old library at Burleigh, and gazing on the portrait of his mother; as he so gazed, he fancied that a cold and awful tremor seized upon him—that he in vain endeavored to withdraw his eyes from the canvas—his sight was chained there by an irresistible spell. Then it seemed to him that the portrait gradually changed;—the features the same, but the bloom vanished into a white and ghastly hue; the colors of the dress faded, their fashion grew more large and flowing, but heavy and rigid, as if cut in stone—the robes of the grave. But on the face there was a soft and melancholy smile, that took from its livid aspect the natural horror:—the lips moved, and, it seemed as if without a sound—the released soul spoke to that which the earth yet owned.

"Return," it said, "to thy native land, and thine own home. Leave not the last relic of her who bore and yet watches over thee to stranger hands. Thy good Angel shall meet thee at thy hearth!"

The voice ceased. With a violent effort Maltravers broke the spell that had forbidden his utterance. He called aloud, and the dream vanished: he was broad awake—his hair erect—the cold dews on his brow. The pallet, rather than bed on which he lay, was

* See, for the description of this scenery, and the fate of De Retz, the high-wrought and glowing romance by Mr. Ritchie, nalled *The Magician.*

opposite to the window, and the wintry moonlight streamed wan and spectral into the cheerless room. But between himself and the light there seemed to stand a shape—a shadow — that into which the portrait had changed in his dream—that which had accosted and chilled his soul. He sprang forward—"My mother! even in the grave canst thou bless thy wretched son! Oh, leave me not—say that thou——" The delusion vanished, and Maltravers fell back insensible.

It was long in vain, when, in the healthful light of day, he revolved this memorable dream, that Maltravers sought to convince himself that dreams need no ministers from heaven or hell to bring the gliding falsehoods along the paths of sleep; that the effect of that dream itself, on his shattered nerves, his excited fancy, was the real and sole raiser of the spectre he had thought to behold on waking. Long was it before his judgment could gain the victory, and reason disown the empire of a turbulent imagination; and, even when at length reluctantly convinced, the dream still haunted him, and he could not shake it from his breast. He longed anxiously for the next night; it came, but it brought neither dreams nor sleep, and the rain beat, and the winds howled, against the casement. Another night, and the moon was again bright; and he fell into a deep sleep; no vision disturbed or hallowed it. He woke ashamed of his own expectation. But the event, such as it was, by giving a new turn to his thoughts, had roused and relieved his spirit, and Misery sate upon him with a lighter load. Perhaps too, to that still haunting recollection, was mainly owing a change in his former purpose. He would still sell the old hall; but he would first return and remove that holy portrait, with pious hands; he would garner up and save all that had belonged to her whose death had been his birth. Ah! never had she known for what trials the infant had been reserved!

CHAPTER III.

* * * "The weary hours steal on,
And flakey darkness breaks."—*Richard III.*

Once more, suddenly and unlooked for, the Lord of Burleigh appeared at the gates of his deserted hall; and again the old housekeeper and her satellites were thrown into dismay and consternation. Amidst blank and welcomeless faces, Maltravers passed into his study: and as soon as the logs burnt and the bustle was over, and he was left alone, he took up the light and passed into the adjoining library. It was then about nine o'clock in the evening; the air of the room felt damp and chill, and the light but faintly struggled against the mournful gloom of the dark book-lined walls and sombre tapestry. He placed the candle on the table, and, drawing aside the curtain that veiled the portrait, gazed with deep emotion, not unmixed with awe, upon the beautiful face whose eyes seemed fixed upon him with mournful sweetness. There is something mystical about those painted ghosts of ourselves that survive our very dust! Who, gazing upon them long and wistfully, does not half fancy that they seem not insensible to his gaze, as if we looked our own life into them, and the eyes that followed us where we moved were animated by a stranger art than the mere trick of the limner's colors?

With folded arms, rapt and motionless, Maltravers contemplated the form that, by the upward rays of the flickering light, seemed to bend down towards the desolate son. How had he ever loved the memory of his mother! —how often in his childish years had he stolen away, and shed wild tears for the loss of that dearest of earthly ties, never to be compensated, never to be replaced!—how had he respected—how sympathized with the very repugnance which his father had at first testified towards him, as the innocent cause of her untimely death! He had never seen her—never felt her passionate kiss; and yet it seemed to him, as he gazed, as if he had known her for years. That strange kind of inner and spiritual memory which often recalls to us places and persons we have never seen before, and which Platonists would resolve to the unquenched and struggling consciousness of a former life, stirred within him, and seemed to whisper, "you were united in the old time." "Yes!" he said, half aloud, "we will never part again. Blessed be the delusion of the dream that recalled to my heart the remembrance of thee, which at least I can cherish without a sin. 'My good angel shall meet me at my hearth!' So didst thou say in the

solemn vision. Ah, does thy soul watch over me still? How long shall it be before the barrier is broken—how long before we meet, but not in dreams!"

The door opened—the housekeeper looked in—"I beg pardon, sir, but I thought your honor would excuse the liberty, though I know it is very bold to ——"

"What is the matter—what do you want?"

"Why, sir, poor Mrs. Elton is dying—they say she cannot get over the night; and as the carriage drove by the cottage window, the nurse told her that the squire was returned—and she has sent up the nurse to entreat to see your honor before she dies. I am sure I was most loath to disturb you, sir, with such a message; and says I, the squire has only just come off a journey, and——"

"Who is Mrs. Elton?"

"Don't your honor remember the poor woman that was run over, and you were so good to, and brought into the house the day Miss Cameron——"

"I remember—say I will be with her in a few minutes. About to die!" muttered Maltravers; "she is to be envied—the prisoner is let loose—the bark leaves the desert isle!"

He took his hat and walked across the park, dimly lighted by the stars, to the cottage of the sufferer. He reached her bedside, and took her hand kindly. She seemed to rally at the sight of him—the nurse was dismissed—they were left alone.

Before morning, the spirit had left that humble clay; and the mists of dawn were heavy on the grass as Maltravers returned home. There were then on his countenance the traces of recent and strong emotion, and his step was elastic, and his cheek flushed. Hope once more broke within him, but mingled with doubt, and faintly combated by reason. In another hour Maltravers was on his way to Brook Green. Impatient, restless, fevered, he urged on the horses—he sowed the road with gold, and, at length, the wheels stopped before the door of the village inn. He descended, asked the way to the curate's house; and, crossing the burial ground, and passing under the shadow of the old yew-tree, entered Aubrey's garden. The curate was at home; and the conference that ensued was of deep and breathless interest to the visitor.

It is now time to place before the reader, in due order and connection, the incidents of that story, the knowledge of which, at that period, broke in detached and fragmentary portions on Maltravers.

CHAPTER IV.

"I canna chuse, but ever will
Be luving to thy father still,
Whair-eir he gae, whair-eir he ryde,
My luve with him maun still abyde;
In weil or wae, whair-eir he gae,
Mine heart can neir depart him frae."
—LADY ANNE BOTHWELL'S *Lament.*

IT may be remembered, that in the earlier part of this continuation of the history of Maltravers it was stated that Aubrey had in early life met with the common lot of a disappointed affection. Eleanor Westbrook, a young woman of his own humble rank, had won, and seemed to return, his love; but of that love she was not worthy. Vain, volatile, and ambitious, she forsook the poor student for a more brilliant marriage. She accepted the hand of a merchant, who was caught by her beauty, and who had the reputation of great wealth. They settled in London, and Aubrey lost all traces of her. She gave birth to an only daughter: and when that child had attained her fourteenth year, her husband suddenly, and seemingly without cause, put an end to his existence. The cause, however, was apparent before he was laid in his grave. He was involved far beyond his fortune—he had died to escape beggary and a jail. A small annuity, not exceeding one hundred pounds, had been secured on the widow. On this income she retired with her child into the country; and chance, the vicinity of some distant connections, and the cheapness of the place, concurred to fix her residence in the outskirts of the town of C * * * * *. Characters that in youth have been most volatile and most worldly, often when bowed down and dejected by the adversity which they are not fitted to encounter, become the most morbidly devout: they ever require an excitement, and when earth denies, they seek it impatiently from Heaven.

This was the case with Mrs. Westbrook; and this new turn of mind brought her naturally into contact with the principal saint of the neighborhood, Mr. Richard Templeton. We

have seen that that gentleman was not happy in his first marriage; death had not then annulled the bond. He was of an ardent and sensual temperament, and quietly, under the broad cloak of his doctrines, he indulged his constiutional tendencies. Perhaps in this respect he was not worse than nine men out of ten. But then he professed to be better than nine hundred thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a million! To a fault of temperament was added the craft of hypocrisy, and the vulgar error became a dangerous vice. Upon Mary Westbrook, the widow's daughter, he gazed with eyes that were far from being the eyes of the spirit. Even at the age of fourteen she charmed him—but when, after watching her ripening beauty expand, three years were added to that age, Mr. Templeton was most deeply in love. Mary was indeed lovely—her disposition naturally good and gentle, but her education worse than neglected. To the frivolities and meannesses of a second-rate fashion, inculcated into her till her father's death, and now succeeded the quackeries, the slavish subservience, the intolerant bigotries, of a transcendental superstition. In a change so abrupt and violent, the whole character of the poor girl was shaken: her principles unsettled, vague and unformed, and naturally of mediocre and even feeble intellect, she clung to the first plank held out to her in "that wide sea of wax" in which she "halted." Early taught to place the most implicit faith in the dictates of Mr. Templeton—fastening her belief round him as the vine winds its tendrils round the oak—yielding to his ascendancy, and pleased with his fostering and almost caressing manner—no confessor in Papal Italy ever was more dangerous to village virtue than Richard Templeton (who deemed himself the archetype of the only pure Protestantism) to the morals and heart of Mary Westbrook.

Mrs. Westbrook, whose constitution had been prematurely broken by long participation in the excesses of London dissipation, and by the reverse of fortune which still preyed upon a spirit it had rather soured than humbled, died when Mary was eighteen. Templeton became the sole friend, comforter, and supporter of the daughter.

In an evil hour (let us trust not from premeditated villany)—an hour when the heart of one was softened by grief and gratitude, and the conscience of the other laid asleep by passion, the virtue of Mary Westbrook was betrayed. Her sorrow and remorse—his own fears of detection and awakened self-reproach, occasioned Templeton the most anxious and poignant regret. There had been a young woman in Mrs. Westbrook's service, who had left a short time before the widow died, in consequence of her marriage. Her husband ill-used her; and glad to escape from him and prove her gratitude to her employer's daughter, of whom she had been extremely fond, she had returned to Miss Westbrook after the funeral of the mother. The name of this woman was Sarah Miles. Templeton saw that Sarah more than suspected his connection with Mary—it was necessary to make a confidant—he selected her. Miss Westbrook was removed to a distant part of the country, and Templeton visited her cautiously and rarely. Four months afterwards, Mrs. Templeton died, and the husband was free to repair his wrong. Oh! how he then repented of what had passed—but four months' delay, and all this sin and sorrow might have been saved! He was now racked with perplexity and doubt: his unfortunate victim was advanced in her pregnancy. It was necessary if he wished his child to be legitimate—still more if he wished to preserve the honor of its mother—that he should not hesitate long in the reparation to which duty and conscience urged him. But on the other hand—he, the saint—the oracle—the immaculate example for all forms, proprieties, and decorums, to scandalize the world by so rapid and premature a hymen—

> "Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
> Had left the flushing in his galled eyes,
> To marry——"

No!—he could not brave the sneer of the gossips—the triumph of his foes—the dejection of his disciples, by so rank and rash a folly. But still Mary pined so, he feared for her health—for his own unborn offspring. There was a middle path—a compromise between duty and the world: he grasped at it as most men similarly situated would have done—they were married, but privately, and under feigned names: the secret was kept close. Sarah Miles was the only witness acquainted with the real condition and names of the parties.

Reconciled to herself, the bride recovered

health and spirits—Templeton formed the most sanguine hopes. He resolved, as soon as the confinement was over, to go abroad—Mary should follow—in a foreign land they should be publicly married—they would remain some years on the Continent—when he returned, his child's age could be put back a year. Oh, nothing could be more clear and easy!

Death shivered into atoms all the plans of Mr. Templeton—Mary suffered most severely in childbirth, and died a few weeks afterwards. Templeton, at first, was inconsolable, but worldly thoughts were great comforters. He had done all that conscience could do to atone a sin, and he was freed from a most embarrassing dilemma, and from a temporary banishment utterly uncongenial and unpalatable to his habits and ideas. But now he had a child—a legitimate child—successor to his name, his wealth—a first born child—the only one ever sprung from him—the prop and hope of advancing years! On this child he doted, with all that paternal passion which the hardest and coldest men often feel the most for their own flesh and blood—for fatherly love is sometimes but a transfer of self-love from one fund to another.

Yet this child—this darling that he longed to show to the whole world—it was absolutely necessary, for the present, that he should conceal and disown. It had happened that Sarah's husband died of his own excesses a few weeks before the birth of Templeton's child, she having herself just recovered from her confinement:—Sarah was therefore free for ever from her husband's vigilance and control. To her care the destined heiress was committed, and her own child put out to nurse. And this was the woman and this the child who had excited so much benevolent curiosity in the breasts of the worthy clergyman and the three* old maids of C * * * * *. Alarmed at Sarah's account of the scrutiny of the parson, and at his own rencontre with that hawk-eyed pastor, Templeton lost no time in changing the abode of the nurse—and to her new residence had the banker bent his way, with rod and angle, on that evening which witnessed his adventure with Luke Darvil.† When Mr. Templeton first met Alice, his own child was only about thirteen or fourteen months old—but little older than Alice's. If the beauty of Mrs. Leslie's *protégée* first excited his coarser nature, her maternal tenderness, her anxious care for her little one, struck a congenial chord in the father's heart. It connected him with her by a mute and unceasing sympathy. Templeton had felt so deeply the alarm and pain of illicit love—he had been (as he profanely believed) saved from the brink of public shame by so signal an interference of grace, that he resolved no more to hazard his good name and his peace of mind upon such perilous rocks.

The dearest desire at his heart was to have his daughter under his roof—to fondle, to play with her—to watch her growth—to win her affection. This, at present, seemed impossible. But if he were to marry—marry a widow, to whom he might confide all, or a portion of, the truth—if that child could be passed off as hers—ah, that was the best plan! And Templeton wanted a wife! Years were creeping on him, and the day would come when a wife would be usefuf as a nurse. But Alice was supposed to be a widow; and Alice was so meek, so docile, so motherly. If she could be induced to remove from C * * * * * —either part with her own child or called it her niece—and adopt his. Such, from time to time, were Templeton's thoughts, as he visited Alice, and found, with every visit, fresh evidence of her tender and beautiful disposition—such the objects, which, in the First Part of this work, we intimated were different from those of mere admiration for her beauty.* But again, worldly doubts and fears—the dislike of so unsuitable an alliance—the worse than lowness of Alice's origin—the dread of discovery for her early error—held him back, wavering and irresolute. To say truth, too, her innocence and purity of thought kept him at a certain distance. He was acute enough to see that he—even he, the great Richard Templeton, might be refused by the faithful Alice.

At last Darvil was dead—he breathed more

* See *Ernest Maltravers*, Part I., Book iv.

† Ibid, Part I., Book iv.

* "Our banker always seemed more struck by Alice's moral feelings than even by her physical beauty. Her love for her child, for instance, impressed him powerfully," etc.—"His feelings altogether for Alice, the designs he entertained towards her, were of a very complicated nature, and it will be long, perhaps, before the reader can thoroughly comprehend them."—See *Ernest Maltravers*, Part I., Book iv.

freely—he revolved more seriously his projects; and, at this time, Sarah, wooed by her first lover, wished to marry again;—his secret would pass from her breast to her second husband's, and thence how far would it travel? Added to this, Sarah's conscience grew uneasy—the brand ought to be effaced from the memory of the dead mother—the legitimacy of the child proclaimed;—she became importunate—she wearied and she alarmed the pious man. He therefore resolved to rid himself of the only witness to his marriage, whose testimony he had cause to fear—of the presence of the only one acquainted with his sin, and the real name of the husband of Mary Westbrook. He consented to Sarah's marriage with William Elton, and offered a liberal dowry on the condition that she should yield to the wish of Elton himself, an adventurous young man, who desired to try his fortunes in the New World. His daughter he must remove elsewhere.

While this was going on, Alice's child, long delicate and drooping, became seriously ill. Symptoms of decline appeared—the physician recommended a milder air, and Devonshire was suggested. Nothing could equal the generous, the fatherly kindness which Templeton evinced on this most painful occasion. He insisted on providing Alice with the means to undertake the journey with ease and comfort; and poor Alice, with a heart heavy with gratitude and sorrow, consented for her child's sake to all he offered.

Now the banker began to perceive that all his hopes and wishes were in good train. He foresaw that the child of Alice was doomed!—that was one obstacle out of the way. Alice herself was to be removed from the sphere of her humble calling. In a distant county she might appear of a better station, and under another name. Conformably to these views, he suggested to her that, in proportion to the seeming wealth and respectability of patients, did doctors attend to their complaints. He proposed that Alice should depart privately to a town many miles off—that there he would provide for her a carriage, and engage a servant—that he would do this for her as for a relation—and that she should take that relations name. To this, Alice, wrapt in her child, and submissive to all that might be for the child's benefit passively consented. It was arranged then as proposed; and, under the name of Cameron, which, as at once a common yet a well-sounding name, occurred to his invention, Alice departed with her sick charge and a female attendant (who knew nothing of her previous calling or story), on the road to Devonshire. Templeton himself resolved to follow her thither in a few days; and it was fixed that they should meet at Exeter.

It was on this melancholy journey that occurred the memorable day when Alice once more beheld Maltravers; and, as she believed, uttering the vows of love to another.* The indisposition of her child had delayed her some hours at the inn: the poor sufferer had fallen asleep; and Alice had stolen from its couch for a little while, when her eyes rested on the father. Oh, how then she longed,—she burned to tell him of the new sanctity, that, by a human life, had been added to their early love! And when, crushed and sick at heart, she turned away, and believed herself forgotten and replaced, it was the pride of the mother, rather than of the mistress, that supported her. She, meek creature, felt not the injury to herself; but *his* child: the sufferer—perhaps the dying one—*there, there* was the wrong! No! she would not hazard the chance of a cold—Great Heaven; perchance an *incredi lous*—look upon the hushed, pale face above. But little time was left for thought—for explanation—for discovery. She saw him—unconscious of the ties so near, and thus lost—depart as a stranger from the spot; and henceforth was gone the sweet hope of living for the future. Nothing was left her but the pledge of that which had been. Mournful, despondent, half broken-hearted, she resumed her journey. At Exeter she was joined, as agreed, by Mr. Templeton; and with him came a fair, a blooming and healthful girl, to contrast her own drooping charge. Though but a few weeks older, you would have supposed the little stranger by a year the senior of Alice's child: the one was so well grown, so advanced; the other so backward, so nipped in the sickly bud.

"You can repay me for all, for more than I have done; more than I ever can do for you and yours," said Templeton; "by taking this young stranger also under your care. It is

* See *Ernest Maltravers*, Part I., Book v.

the child of one dear, most dear to me; an orphan; I know not with whom else to place it. Let it for the present be supposed your own—the elder child."

Alice could refuse nothing to her benefactor; but her heart did not open at first to the beauful girl, whose sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks mocked the languid looks and faded hues of her own darling. But the sufferer seemed to hail a playmate; it smiled, it put forth its poor, thin hands—it uttered its inarticulate cry of pleasure, and Alice burst into tears, and clasped them *both* to her heart.

Mr. Templeton took care not to rest under the same roof with her he now seriously intended to make his wife; but he followed Alice to the sea-side, and visited her daily. Her infant rallied—it was tenacious of the upper air—it clung to life so fondly: poor child, it could not forsee what a bitter thing to some of us life is! And now it was that Templeton, learning from Alice her adventure with her absent lover—learning that all hope in that quarter was gone—seized the occasion, and pressed his suit. Alice at that hour was overflowing with gratitude; in her child's reviving looks she read all her obligations to her benefactor. But still, at the word *love*, at the name of *marriage*, her heart recoiled; and the lost—the faithless—came back to his fatal throne. In choked and broken accents, she startled the banker with the refusal—the faltering, tearful, but resolute refusal—of his suit.

But Templeton brought new engines to work: he wooed her through her child; he painted all the brilliant prospects that would open to the infant by her marriage with him. He would cherish, rear, provide for it as his own. This shook her resolves; but this did not prevail. He had recourse to a more generous appeal: he told her so much of his history with Mary Westbrook as commenced with his hasty and indecorous marriage—attributing the haste to love! made her comprehend his scruples in owning the child of a union the world would be certain to ridicule or condemn; he expatiated on the inestimable blessings she could afford him, by delivering him from all embarrassment, and restoring his daughter, though under a borrowed name, to her father's roof. At this Alice mused,—at this she seemed irresolute. She had long seen how inexpressibly dear to Templeton was the child confided to her care; how he grew pale if the slightest ailment reached her—how he chafed at the very wind if it visited her cheek too roughly—and she now said to him simply:—

"Is your child, in truth, your dearest object in life? Is it with her, and her alone, that your dearest hopes are connected?"

"It is!—it is, indeed!" said the banker, honestly, surprised out of his gallantry: "at least," he added, recovering his self-possession, "as much so as is compatible with my affection for you."

"And only if I marry you, and adopt her as my own, do you think that your secret may be safely kept, and all your wishes with respect to her be fulfilled?"

"Only so."

"And for that reason, chiefly, nay entirely, you condescend to forget what I have been, and seek my hand? Well—if that were all—I owe you too much; my poor babe tells me too loudly what I owe you, to draw back from any thing that can give you so blessed an enjoyment. Ah! one's child!—one's own child—under one's own roof—it *is* such a blessing! But then, if I marry you, it can be only to secure to you that object—to be as a mother to your child—but wife only in name to you! I am not so lost as to despise myself. I know now, though I knew it not at first, that I have been guilty; nothing can excuse that guilt, but fidelity to *him!* Oh, yes! I never—never can be unfaithful to my babe's father! As for all else, dispose of me as you will." And Alice, who from very innocence had uttered all this without a blush, now clasped her hands passionately, and left Templeton speechless with mortification and surprise.

When he recovered himself he affected not to understand her; but Alice was not satisfied, and all further conversation ceased. He began slowly, and at last, and after repeated conferences and urgings, to comprehend how strange and stubborn in some points was the humble creature whom his proposals so highly honored. Though his daughter was indeed his first object in life—though for her he was willing to make a *mésalliance*, the extent of which it would be incumbent on him studiously to conceal;—yet still, the beauty of Alice awoke an earthlier sentiment that he was not disposed to conquer. He was quite willing to make promises, and talk generously;—but

when it came to an oath—a solemn, a binding oath—and this Alice rigidly exacted—he was startled, and drew back. Though hypocritical, he was, as we have before said, a most sincere believer. He might creep through a promise with unbruised conscience; but he was not one who could have dared to violate an oath, and lay the load of perjury on his soul. Perhaps, after all, the union never would have taken place, but Templeton fell ill; that soft and relaxing air did not agree with him; a low, but dangerous fever seized him, and the worldly man trembled at the aspect of Death. It was in this illness that Alice nursed him with a daughter's vigilance and care; and when at length he recovered, impressed with her zeal and kindness—softened by illness—afraid of the approach of solitary age—and feeling more than ever his duties to his motherless child, he threw himself at Alice's feet, and solemnly vowed all that she required.

It was during this residence in Devonshire, and especially during his illness, that Templeton made and cultivated the acquaintance of Mr. Aubrey. The good clergyman prayed with him by his sick bed; and when Templeton's danger was at its height, he sought to releive his conscience by a confession of his wrongs to Mary Westbrook. The name startled Aubrey; and when he learned that the lovely child who had so often sate on his knee, and smiled in his face, was the granddaughter of his first and only love, he had a new interest in her welfare, a new reason to urge Templeton to reparation, a new motive to desire to procure for the infant years of Eleanor's grandchild the gentle care of the young mother, whose own bereavement he sorrowfully foretold. Perhaps the advice and exhortations of Aubrey went far towards assisting the conscience of Mr. Templeton, and reconciling him to the sacrifice he made to his affection for his daughter. Be that as it may, he married Alice, and Aubrey solemnized and blessed the chill and barren union.

But now came a new and inexpressible affliction; the child of Alice had rallied but for a time. The dread disease had but dallied with its prey; it came on with rapid and sudden force; and within a month from the day that saw Alice the pride of Templeton, the last hope was gone, and the mother was bereft and childless!

The blow that stunned Alice was not, after the first natural shock of sympathy, an unwelcome event to the banker. Now *his* child would be Alice's sole care; now there could be no gossip, no suspicion why, in life and after death, he should prefer one child, supposed not his own, to the other.

He hastened to remove Alice from the scene of her affliction. He dismissed the solitary attendant who had accompanied her on her journey; he bore his wife to London, and finally settled as we have seen, at a villa in its vicinity. And there, more and more, day by day, centered his love upon the supposed daughter of Mrs. Templeton, his darling and his heiress, the beautiful Evelyn Cameron.

For the first year or two, Templeton evinced some alarming disposition to escape from the oath he had imposed upon himself; but on the slightest hint there was a sternness in the wife, in all else so respectful, so submissive, that repressed and awed him. She even threatened—and at one time was with difficulty prevented carrying the threat into effect—to leave his roof for ever, if there were the slightest question of the sanctity of his vow. Templeton trembled; such a separation would excite gossip, curioslty, scandal, a noise in the world, public talk, possible discovery. Besides, Alice was necessary to Evelyn, necessary to his own comfort; something to scold in health, something to rely upon in illness. Gradually then, but sullenly, he reconciled himself to his lot, and as years and infirmities grew upon him, he was contented, at least, to have secured a faithful friend and an anxious nurse. Still a marriage of this sort was not blest; Templeton's vanity was wounded; his temper, always harsh, was soured; he avenged his affront by a thousand petty tyrannies; and, without a murmur, Alice perhaps, in those years of rank and opulence, suffered more than in all her roofless wanderings, with love at her heart and her infant in her arms.

Evelyn was to be the heiress to the wealth of the banker. But the *title* of the new peer!—if he could unite wealth and title, and set the coronet on that young brow! This had led him to seek the alliance with Lumley. And on his death-bed, it was not the secret of Alice, but that of Mary Westbrook and his daughter, which he had revealed to his dismayed and astonished nephew, in excuse for

the apparently unjust alienation of his property, and as the cause of the alliance he had sought.

While her husband—if husband he might be called—lived, Alice had seemed to bury in her bosom her regret—deep, mighty, passionate, as it was—for her lost child—the child of the unforgotten lover, to whom, through such trials, and amid such new ties, she had been faithful from first to last. But when once more free, her heart flew back to the far and lowly grave. Hence her yearly visits to Brook Green—hence her purchase of the cottage, hallowed by memories of the dead. There, on that lawn, had she borne forth the fragile form, to breathe the soft noontide air; there, in that chamber, had she watched, and hoped, and prayed, and despaired; there, in that quiet burial-ground, rested the beloved dust! But Alice, even in her holiest feelings, was not selfish: she forbore to gratify the first wish of her heart till Evelyn's education was sufficiently advanced to enable her to quit the neighborhood; and then, to the delight of Aubrey (who saw in Evelyn a fairer, and nobler, and purer Eleanor), she came to the solitary spot, which, in all the earth, was the *least* solitary to her!

And now the image of the lover of her youth—which, during her marriage, she had *sought*, at least, to banish—returned to her, and, at times, inspired her with the only hopes that the grave had not yet transferred to heaven! In relating her tale to Aubrey, or in conversing with Mrs. Leslie—whose friendship she still maintained—she found that both concurred in thinking that this obscure and wandering Butler, so skilled in an art in which eminence in men is generally professional, must be of mediocre, or perhaps humble, station. Ah! now that she was free and rich, if she were to meet him again, and his love was not all gone, and he would believe in *her* strange and constant truth—now, *his* infidelity could be forgiven—forgotten in the benefits it might be hers to bestow! And how, poor Alice, in that remote village, was chance to throw him in your way? She knew not: but something often whispered to her,—"Again you shall meet those eyse—again you shall hear that voice; and you shall tell him, weeping on his breast, how you loved his child!" And would he not have forgotten her?—would he not have formed new ties?—could he read the loveliness of unchangeable affection in that pale and pensive face? Alas, when we love intensely, it is difficult to make us fancy that there is no love in return!

The reader is acquainted with the adventures of Mrs. Elton, the sole confidant of the secret union of Templeton and Evelyn's mother. By a singular fatality, it was the selfish and characteristic recklessness of Vargrave that had, in fixing her home at Burleigh, ministered to the revelation of his own villanous deceit. On returning to England she had inquired for Mr. Templeton; she had learned that he had married again, had been raised to the peerage under the title of Lord Vargrave, and was gathered to his fathers. She had no claim on his widow or his family. But the unfortunate child who should have inherited his property—she could only suppose her dead.

When she first saw Evelyn, she was startled by the likeness to her unfortunate mother. But the unfamiliar name of Cameron—the intelligence received from Maltravers that Evelyn's mother still lived—dispelled her suspicions: and though at times the resemblance haunted her, she doubted and inquired no more. In fact, her own infirmities grew upon her, and pain usurped her thoughts.

Now it so happened, that the news of the engagement of Maltravers to Miss Cameron became known to the county but a little time before he arrived—for news travels slow from the Continent to our provinces—and, of course, excited all the comment of the villagers. Her nurse repeated the tale to Mrs. Elton, who instantly remembered the name, and recalled the resemblanee of Miss Cameron to the unfortuate Mary Westbrook.

"And," said the gossiping nurse, "she was engaged, they say, to a great lord, and gave him up for the squire—a great lord in the court, who had been staying at Parson Merton's!—Lord Vargrave!"

"Lord Vargrave!" exclaimed Mrs. Elton, remembering the title to which Mr. Templeton had been raised.

"Yes; they do say as how the late lord left Miss Cameron all his money—such a heap of it—though she was not his child—over the head of his nevy, the present lord, on the understanding like that they were to be married when she came of age. But she would not take

to him after she had seen the squire. And, to be sure, the squire is the finest-looking gentleman in the county."

"Stop—stop!" said Mrs. Elton, feebly; "the late lord left all his fortune to Miss Cameron?—not his child! I guess the riddle—I understand it all!—my foster-child!" she murmured, turning away; "how could I have mistaken that likeness?"

The agitation of the discovery she supposed she had made, her joy at the thought that the child she had loved as her own was alive and possessed of its rights, expedited the progress of Mrs. Elton's disease; and Maltravers arrived just in time to learn her confession (which she naturally wished to make to one who was at once her benefactor, and supposed to be the destined husband of her foster-child), and to be agitated with hope—with joy—at her solemn conviction of the truth of her surmises. If Evelyn were not his daughter—even if not to be his bride—what a weight from his soul! He hastened to Brook Green; and, dreading to rush at once to the presence of Alice, he recalled Aubrey to his recollection. In the interview he sought, all, or at least much, was cleared up. He saw at once the premeditated and well-planned villany of Vargrave. And Alice, her tale—her sufferings—her indomitable love!—how should he meet *her*.

CHAPTER V.

"Yet once more, O ye laurels! and once more,
Ye myrtles!"—LYCIDAS.

WHILE Maltravers was yet agitated and excited by the disclosures of the curate, to whom, as a matter of course, he had divulged his own identity with the mysterious Butler, Aubrey, turning his eyes to the casement, saw the form of Lady Vargrave slowly approaching towards the house.

"Will you withdraw to the inner room," he said; "she is coming; you are not yet prepared to meet her!—nay, would it be well?"

"Yes, yes—I am prepared—we must be alone. I will await her here."

"But—"

"Nay, I implore you!"

The curate, without another word, retired into the inner apartment, and Maltravers, sinking in a chair, breathlessly awaited the entrance of Lady Vargrave. He soon heard the light step without; the door, which opened at once on the old-fashioned parlor, was gently unclosed, and Lady Vargrave was in the room! In the position he had taken, only the outline of Ernest's form was seen by Alice, and the daylight came dim through the cottage casement: and, seeing some one seated in the curate's accustomed chair, she could but believe that it was Aubrey himself.

"Do not let me interrupt you," said that sweet, low voice, whose music had been dumb for so many years to Maltravers—"but I have a letter from France, from a stranger—it alarms me so—it is about Evelyn"—and, as if to imply that she meditated a longer visit than ordinary, Lady Vargrave removed her bonnet, and placed it on the table. Surprised that the curate had not answered, had not come forward to welcome her, she then approached: Maltravers rose, and they stood before each other face to face. And how lovely still was Alice! lovelier he thought even than of old! And those eyes, so divinely blue, so dovelike and soft, yet with some spiritual and unfathomable mystery in their clear depth, were once more fixed upon him. Alice seemed turned to stone; she moved not—she spoke not—she scarcely breathed; she gazed spell-bound, as if her senses—as if life itself—had deserted her.

"Alice!" murmured Maltravers,—"Alice, we meet at last!"

His voice restored memory, consciousness, youth, at once to her! She uttered a loud cry of unspeakable joy, of rapture! She sprang forward—reserve, fear, time, change, all forgotten—she threw herself into his arms, she clasped him to her heart again and again!—the faithful dog that has found his master expresses not his transport more uncontrollably, more wildly. It was something fearful—the excess of her ecstasy!—she kissed his hands, his clothes; she laughed, she wept: and at last, as words came, she laid her head on his breast, and said passion-

ately,—"I have been true to thee! I have been true to thee—or this hour would have killed me!" Then, as if alarmed by his silence, she looked up into his face, and, as his burning tears fell upon her cheek, she said again and with more hurried vehemence—"I *have* been faithful—do you not believe me?"

"I do—I do, noble unequalled Alice! why, why were you so long lost to me? Why now does your love so shame my own?"

At these words, Alice appeared to awaken from her first oblivion of all that had chanced since they met: she blushed deeply, and drew herself gently and bashfully from his embrace. "Ah!" she said, in altered and humbled accents, "you have loved another! perhaps you have no love left for me! Is it so? is it? No, no;—those eyes—you love me—you love me still!"

And again she clung to him, as if it were heaven to believe all things, and death to doubt. Then, after a pause, she drew him gently with both her hands towards the light, and gazed upon him fondly, proudly, as if to trace, line by line, and feature by feature, the countenance which had been to her sweet thoughts as the sunlight to the flowers:—"Changed, changed," she muttered—"but still the same,—still beautiful, still divine!" She stopped: a sudden thought struck her: his garments were worn and soiled by travel, and that princely crest, fallen and dejected, no longer towered in proud defiance above the sons of men. "You are not rich," she exclaimed, eagerly—"say you are not rich! I am rich enough for both; it is all yours—all yours—I did not betray you for it; there is no shame in it—Oh, we shall be so happy! Thou art come back to thy poor Alice! thou knowest how she loved thee!"

There was in Alice's manner—her wild joy, something so different from her ordinary self, that none who could have seen her—quiet, pensive, subdued—would have fancied her the same being. All that Society and its woes had taught were gone; and Nature once more claimed her fairest child. The very years seemed to have fallen from her brow, and she looked scarcely older than when she had stood with him beneath the moonlight by the violet banks far away. Suddenly, her color faded; the smile passed from the dimpled lips; a sad and solemn aspect succeeded to that expression of passionate joy—"Come," she said in a whisper, "come, follow;" and, still clasping his hand, she drew him to the door. Silent and wonderingly he followed her across the lawn, through the moss-grown gate, and into the lonely burial-ground. She moved on with a noiseless and gliding step—so pale, so hushed, so breathless, that, even in the noonday, you might have half fancied the fair shape was not owned by earth. She paused where the yew-tree cast its gloomy shadow; and the small and tombless mound, separated from the rest, was before them. She pointed to it, and falling on her knees beside it, murmured—"Hush, it sleeps below—thy child!" She covered her face with both her hands, and her form shook convulsively.

Beside that form, and before that grave, knelt Maltravers. There vanished the last remnant of his stoic pride; and there—Evelyn herself forgotten—there did he pray to Heaven for pardon to himself, and blessings on the heart he had betrayed. There solemnly did he vow, the remainder of his years, to guard from all future ill the faithful and childless mother!

CHAPTER VI.

"Will Fortune never come with both hands full,
But write her fair words still in foulest letters?"
—*Henry IV.*, Part II.

I PASS over those explanations—that record of Alice's eventful history—which Maltravers learnt from her own lips, to confirm and add to the narrative of the curate, the purport of which is already known to the reader.

It was many hours before Alice was sufficiently composed to remember the object for which she had sought the curate. But she had laid the letter which she had brought, and which explained all, on the table at the vicarage; and when Maltravers, having at last induced Alice, who seemed afraid to lose sight

of him for an instant, to retire to her room, and seek some short repose, returned towards the vicarage, he met Aubrey in the garden. The old man had taken the friend's acknowledged license to read the letter evidently meant for his eye; and, alarmed and anxious, he now eagerly sought a consultation with Maltravers. The letter, written in English, as familiar to the writer as her own tongue, was from Madame de Ventadour. It had been evidently dictated by the kindest feelings. After apologizing briefly for her interference, she stated that Lord Vargrave's marriage with Miss Cameron was now a matter of public notoriety; that it would take place in a few days; that it was observed with suspicion that Miss Cameron appeared nowhere; that she seemed almost a prisoner in her room; that certain expressions which had dropped from Lady Doltimore had alarmed her greatly.

According to these expressions, it would seem that Lady Vargrave was not apprised of the approaching event; that, considering Miss Cameron's recent engagement to Mr. Maltravers, suddenly (and, as Valerie thought, unaccountably) broken off, on the arrival of Lord Vargrave; considering her extreme youth, her brilliant fortune; and, Madame de Ventadour delicately hinted, considering also Lord Vargrave's character for unscrupulous determination in the furtherance of any object on which he was bent—considering all this, Madame de Ventadour had ventured to address Miss Cameron's mother, and to guard her against the possibility of design or deceit. Her best apology for her intrusion must be, her deep intrusion in Miss Cameron, and her long friendship for one to whom Miss Cameron had been so lately betrothed. If Lady Vargrave were aware of the new engagement, and had sanctioned it, of course her intrusion was unseasonable and superfluous; but, if ascribed to its real motive, would not be the less forgiven.

It was easy for Maltravers to see in this letter how generous and zealous had been that friendship for himself, which could have induced the woman of the world to undertake so officious a task. But of this he thought not, as he hurried over the lines, and shuddered at Evelyn's urgent danger.

"This intelligence," said Aubrey, "must be, indeed, a surprise to Lady Vargrave. For we have not heard a word from Evelyn or Lord Vargrave to announce such a marriage; and she (and myself, till this day) believed that the engagement between Evelyn and Mr. ——, I mean," said Aubrey, with confusion,—"I mean yourself, was still in force: Lord Vargrave's villany is apparent; we must act immediately. What is to be done?"

"I will return to Paris to-morrow; I will defeat his machinations—expose his falsehood!"

"You may need a proxy for Lady Vargrave, an authority for Evelyn: one whom Lord Vargrave knows to possess the secret of her birth, her rights: I will go with you. We must speak to Lady Vargrave!"

Maltravers turned sharply round. "And Alice knows not who I am: that I—I am, or was, a few weeks ago, the suitor of another; and that other the child she has reared as her own! Unhappy Alice! in the very hour of her joy at my return, is she to writhe beneath this new affliction!"

"Shall I break it to her?" said Aubrey, pityingly.

"No, no; these lips must inflict the last wrong?"

Maltravers walked away, and the curate saw him no more till night.

In the interval, and late in the evening, Maltravers rejoined Alice.

The fire burned clear on the hearth—the curtains were drawn—the pleasant but simple drawing-room of the cottage smiled its welcome as Maltravers entered, and Alice sprung up to greet him! It was as if the old days of the music-lesson and meerschaum had come back.

"This is yours," said Alice, tenderly, as he looked round the apartment. "Now—now I know what a blessed thing riches are! Ah, you are looking on that picture—it is of her who supplied your daughter's place—she is so beautiful, so good, you will love her as a daughter. Oh, that letter—that—that letter—I forgot it till now—it is at the vicarage—I must go there immediately, and you will come too—you will advise us."

"Alice, I have read the letter—I know all. Alice, sit down and hear me—it is you who have to learn from me. In our young days, I was accustomed to tell you stories in winter nights like these—stories of love like our own

—of sorrows which, at that time, we only knew by hearsay. I have one now for your ear, truer and sadder than they were. Two children, for they were then little more—children in ignorance of the world—children in freshness of heart—children almost in years—were thrown together by strange vicissitudes, more than eighteen years ago. They were of different sexes—they loved, and they erred. But the error was solely with the boy; for what was innocence in her was but passion in him. He loved her dearly; but at that age her qualities were half developed. He knew her beautiful, simple, tender; but he knew not all the virtue, the faith, and the nobleness that Heaven had planted in her soul. They parted—they knew not each other's fate. He sought her anxiously, but in vain; and sorror and remorse long consumed him, and her memory threw a shadow over his existence. But again—for his love had not the exalted holiness of hers (*she* was true !)—he sought to renew in others the charm he had lost with her. In vain—long—long in vain. Alice, you know to whom the tale refers. Nay, listen yet. I have heard from the old man yonder, that you were witness to a scene many years ago which deceived you into the belief that you beheld a rival. It was not so: that lady yet lives,—then, as now, a friend to me; nothing more. I grant that, at one time, my fancy allured me to her, but my heart was still true to thee."

"Bless you for those words!" murmured Alice; and she crept more closely to him.

He went on. "Circumstances, which at some calmer occasion you shall hear, again nearly connected my fate by marriage to another. I had then seen you at a distance, unseen by you—seen you apparently surrounded by respectability and opulence; and I blessed Heaven that your lot, at least, was not that of penury and want." [Here Maltravers related where he had caught that brief glimpse of Alice*—how he had sought for her again and again in vain]. "From that hour," he continued, "seeing you in circumstances of which I could not have dared to dream, I felt more reconciled to the past; yet, when on the verge of marriage with another—beautiful, gifted, generous as she was—a thought—a memory half acknowledged—dimly traced—chained back my sentiments; and admiration, esteem, and gratitude, were not love! Death—a death, melancholy and tragic, forbade this union; and I went forth in the world, a pilgrim and a wanderer. Years rolled away, and I thought I had conquered the desire for love—a desire that had haunted me since I lost thee. But, suddenly and recently, a being, beautiful as yourself—sweet, guileless, and young as you were when we met—woke in me a new and a strange sentiment. I will not conceal it from you: Alice, at last I loved another! Yet, singular as it may seem to you, it was a certain resemblance to yourself, not in feature, but in the tones of the voice—the nameless grace of gesture and manner—the very music of your once happy laugh—those traits of resemblance which I can now account for, and which children catch not from their parents only, but from those they most see, and, loving most, most imitate in their tender years;—all these, I say, made perhaps a chief attraction, that drew me towards—Alice, are you prepared for it?—drew me towards Evelyn Cameron. Know me in my real character, by my true name: I am that Maltravers to whom the hand of Evelyn was a few weeks ago betrothed!"

He paused and ventured to look up at Alice—she was exceedingly pale, and her hands were tightly clasped together—but she neither wept nor spoke. The worst was over—he continued more rapidly, and with less constrained an effort. "By the art, the duplicity, the falsehood of Lord Vargrave, I was taught in a sudden hour to believe that Evelyn was our daughter—that you recoiled from the prospect of beholding once more the author of so many miseries. I need not tell you, Alice, of the horror that succeeded to love. I pass over the tortures I endured. By a train of incidents to be related to you hereafter, I was led to suspect the truth of Vargrave's tale. I came hither—I have learned all from Aubrey—I regret no more the falsehood that so racked me for the time! I regret no more the rupture of my bond with Evelyn—I regret nothing that brings me at last free and unshackled to thy feet, and acquaints me with thy sublime faith and ineffable love. Here, then—here beneath your own roof—here he, at once your earliest friend and foe, kneels to you for pardon and for hope!—he woos you as his wife—his com-

* See *Ernest Maltravers*, Part I., Book v.

panion to the grave !—forget all his errors, and be to him, under a holier name, all that you were to him of old !"

"And you are then Evelyn's suitor ?—you are he whom she loves ?—I see it all—all !" Alice rose, and, before he was even aware of her purpose, or conscious of what she felt, she had vanished from the room.

Long, and with the bitterest feelings, he awaited her return—she came not. At last he wrote a hurried note, imploring her to join him again, to relieve his suspense—to believe his sincerity—to accept his vows. He sent it to her own room, to which she had hastened to bury her emotions. In a few minutes there came to him this answer, written in pencil, blotted with tears.

"I thank you—I understand your heart—but forgive me—I cannot see you yet—she is so beautiful and good—she is worthy of you. I shall soon be reconciled—God bless you—bless you both !"

The door of the vicarage was opened abruptly, and Maltravers entered with a hasty but heavy tread.

"Go to her—go to that augel—go, I beseech you ! Tell her that she wrongs me—if she thinks, I can ever wed another—ever have an object in life, but to atone to,—to merit her. "Go—plead for me."

Aubrey, who soon gathered from Maltravers what had passed, departed to the cottage—it was near midnight before he returned. Maltravers met him in the church-yard, beside the yew-tree. "Well, well—what message do you bring ?"

"She wishes that we should both set off for Paris to-morrow. Not a day is to be lost—we must save Evelyn from this snare."

"Evelyn ! Yes, Evelyn shall be saved but the rest—the rest—why do you turn away ?"

"'You are not the poor artist—the wandering adventurer—you are the high-born, the wealthy, the renowned Maltravers: Alice has nothing to confer on you: You have won the love of Evelyn—Alice cannot doom the child confided to her care to hopeless affection: You love Evelyn—Alice cannot compare herself to the young, and educated, and beautiful creature, whose love is a priceless treasure: Alice prays you not to grieve for her: She will soon be content and happy in your happiness.' This is the message."

"And what said you ?—did you not tell her such words would break my heart ?"

"No matter what I said—I mistrust myself when I advise her. Her feelings are truer than all our wisdom !"

Maltravers made no answer, and the curate saw him gliding rapidly away by the starlit graves towards the village.

CHAPTER VII.

"Think you I can a resolution fetch
From flowery tenderness ?"
—Measure for Measure.

THEY were on the road to Dover. Maltravers leant back in the corner of the carriage with his hat over his brows, though the morning was yet too dark for the curate to perceive more than the outline of his features. Milestone after milestone glided by the wheels, and neither of the travellers broke the silence. It was a cold, raw morning, and the mists rose sullenly from the dank hedges and comfortless fields.

Stern and self-accusing was the scrutiny of Maltravers into the recesses of his conscience, and the blotted pages of the Past. That pale and solitary mother, mourning over the grave of her—of his own—child, rose again before his eyes, and seemed silently to ask him for an account of the heart he had made barren, and of the youth to which his love had brought the joylessness of age. With the image of Alice,—afar, alone, whether in her wanderings, a beggar and an outcast, or in that hollow prosperity, in which the very ease of the frame allowed more leisure to the pinings of the heart—with that image, pure, sorrowing, and faithful from first to last, he compared his own wild and wasted youth—his resort to fancy and to passion for excitement. He contrasted with her patient resignation his own arrogant rebellion against the trials, the bitterness of which his proud spirit had exaggerated—his contempt for the pursuits and aims of others—the imperious indolence of his later life, and his forgetfulness of the duties

which Providence had fitted him to discharge. His mind, once so rudely hurled from that complacent pedestal, from which it had so long looked down on men, and said, "I am wiser and better than you," became even too acutely sensitive to its own infirmities; and that desire for Virtue, which he had ever deeply entertained, made itself more distinctly and loudly heard amidst the ruins and the silence of his pride.

From the contemplation of the Past, he roused himself to face the Future. Alice had refused his hand—Alice herself had ratified and blessed his union with another! Evelyn so madly loved—Evelyn might still be his! No law—from the violation of which, even in thought, Human Nature recoils appalled and horror-stricken—forbade him to reclaim her hand—to snatch her from the grasp of Vargrave—to woo again, and again to win her! But did Maltravers welcome, did he embrace that thought? Let us do him justice: he did not. He felt that Alice's resolution, in the first hour of mortified affection, was not to be considered final; and even if it were so, he felt yet more deeply that her love—the love that had withstood so many trials—never could be subdued. Was he to make her nobleness a curse? Was he to say, "Thou hast passed away in thy generation, and I leave thee again to thy solitude, for her whom thou hast cherished as a child?" He started in dismay from the thought of this new and last blow upon the shattered spirit; and then fresh and equally sacred obstacles between Evelyn and himself broke slowly on his view. Could Templeton rise from his grave, with what resentment, with what just repugnance, would he have regarded the betrayer of his wife (even though wife but in name) the suitor to his child!

These thoughts came in fast and fearful force upon Maltravers, and served to strengthen his honor and his conscience. He felt that though, in law, there was no shadow of connection hetween Evelyn and himself, yet his tie with Alice had been of a nature that ought to separate him from one who had regarded Alice as a mother. The load of horror, the agony of shame, were indeed gone; but still a voice whispered as before. "Evelyn is lost to thee for ever!" But so shaken had already been her image in the late storms and convulsion of his soul, that this thought was preferable to the thought of sacrificing Alice. If *that* were all—but Evelyn might still love him; and justice to Alice might be misery to her! He started from his revery with a vehement gesture, and groaned audibly.

The curate turned to address to him some words of inquiry and surprise; but the words were unheard, and he perceived, by the advancing daylight, that the countenance of Maltravers was that of a man utterly rapt and absorbed by some mastering and irresistible thought. Wisely therefore he left his companion in peace, and returned to his own anxious and engrossing meditations.

The travellers did not rest till they arrived at Dover. The vessel started early the following morning, and Aubrey, who was much fatigued, retired to rest. Maltravers glanced at the clock upon the mantel-piece: it was the hour of nine. For him there was no hope of sleep; and the prospect of the slow night was that of dreary suspense, and torturing self-commune.

As he turned restlessly in his seat, the waiter entered to say that there was a gentleman, who had caught a glimpse of him below on his arrival, and who was anxious to speak with him. Before Maltravers could answer, the gentleman himself entered, and Maltravers recognized Legard.

"I beg your pardon," said the latter, in a tone of great agitation, "but I was most anxious to see you for a few moments. I have just returned to England—all places alike hateful to me! I read in the papers—an—an announcement—which—which occasions me the greatest—I know not what I would say,—but is it true?—Read this paragraph;" and Legard placed "The Courier" before Maltravers.

The passage was as follows.—

"It is whispered that Lord Vargrave, who is now at Paris, is to be married in a few days to the beautiful and wealthy Miss Cameron, to whom he has been long engaged."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Legard, following the eyes of Maltravers, as he glanced over the paragraph—"were not *you* the lover,—the accepted, the happy lover of Miss Cameron? Speak, tell me, I implore you!—that it was for

you, who saved my life and redeemed my honor, and not for that cold, schemer, that I renounced all my hopes of earthly happiness, and surrendered the dream of winning the heart and hand of the only woman I ever loved!"

A deep shade fell over the features of Maltravers. He gazed earnestly and long upon the working countenance of Legard, and said, after a pause,—

"You, too, loved her, then. I never knew it—never guessed it:—or, if once I suspected, it was but for a moment; and——"

"Yes," interrupted Legard, passionately, "Heaven is my witness how fervently and truly I did love! I do still love Evelyn Cameron! But when you confessed to me your affection—your hopes—I felt all that I owed you;—I felt that I never ought to become your rival. I left Paris abruptly. What I have suffered I will not say; but it was some comfort to think that I had acted as became one who owed you a debt never to be cancelled nor repaid. I travelled from place to place, each equally hateful and wearisome,—at last, I scarce know why, I returned to England. I have arrived this day,—and now——but tell me, is it true?"

"I believe it true," said Maltravers, in a hollow voice, "that Evelyn is at this momont engaged to Lord Vargrave. I believe it equally true, that that engagement, founded upon false impressions, never will be fulfilled. With that hope, and that belief, I am on my road to Paris."

"And she will be yours still?" said Legard, turning away his face: "well, that I can bear —may you be happy, sir!"

"Stay, Legard," said Maltravers, in a voice of great feeling. "Let us understand each other better: you have renounced your passion to your sense of honor—(Maltravers paused thoughtfully).—It was noble in you, it was more than just to me; I thank you and respect you. But, Legard, was there aught in the manner, the bearing of Evelyn Cameron, that could lead you to suppose that she would have returned your affection? True, had we started on equal terms, I am not vain enough to be blind to your advantages of youth and person; but I believed that the affections of Evelyn were already mine, before we met at Paris."

"It might be so," said Legard, gloomily; "nor is it for me to say, that a heart so pure and generous as Evelyn's could deceive yourself or me. Yet I *had* fancied—I *had* hoped—while you stood aloof, that the partiality with which she regarded you was that of admiration more than love; that you had dazzled her imagination, rather than won her heart. I had hoped that I should win, that I was winning, my way to her affection! But let this pass; I drop the subject for ever—only, Maltravers, only do me justice. You are a proud man, and your pride has often irritated and stung me, in spite of my gratitude. Be more lenient to me than you have been; think that, though I have my errors and my follies, I am still capable of some conquests over myself. And most sincerely do I now wish that Evelyn's love may be to you that blessing it would have been to me!"

This was, indeed, a new triumph over the pride of Maltravers—a new humiliation. He had looked with a cold contempt on this man, because he affected not to be above the herd; and this man had preceded him in the very sacrifice he himself meditated.

"Legard," said Maltravers, and a faint blush overspread his face, "you rebuke me justly. I acknowledge my fault, and I ask you to forgive it. From this night, whatever happens, I shall hold it an honor to be admitted to your friendship; from this night, George Legard never shall find in me the offences of arrogance and harshness."

Legard wrung the hand held out to him warmly, but made no answer; his heart was full, and he would not trust himself to speak.

"You think, then," resumed Maltravers, in a more thoughtful tone; "you think that Evelyn could have loved you, had my pretensions not crossed your own? And you think also —pardon me, dear Legard—that you could have acquired the steadiness of character, the firmness of purpose, which one so fair, so young, so inexperienced and susceptible, so surrounded by a thousand temptations, would need in a guardian and protector?"

"Oh, do not judge of me by what I have been. I feel that Evelyn could have reformed errors worse than mine; that her love would have elevated dispositions yet more light and commonplace. You do not know what miracles love works! But now, what is there left for me?—what matters it how frivolous and

poor the occupations which can distract my thoughts, and bring me forgetfulness? Forgive me; I have no right to obtrude all this egotism on you."

"Do not despond, Legard," said Maltravers, kindly; "there may be better fortunes in store for you than you yet anticipate. I cannot say more now; but will you remain at Dover a few days longer?—within a week you shall hear from me. I will not raise hopes that it may not be mine to realize. But if it be as you think it was—why—little, indeed, would rest with me. Nay, look not on me so wistfully," added Maltravars, with a mournful smile; "and let the subject close for the present. You will stay at Dover?"

"I will; but——"

"No buts, Legard; it is so settled."

BOOK ELEVENTH.

γθουπος ἀνερλετὸς πεφυκώς.—M. ANTONIN, lib. 64.

Man is born to be a doer of good.

CHAPTER I.

* * * "His teeth he still did grind,
And grimly gnash, threatening revenge in vain."
—SPENSER.

IT is now time to return to Lord Vargrave. His most sanguine hopes were realized; all things seemed to prosper. The hand of Evelyn Cameron was pledged to him—the wedding-day was fixed. In less than a week, she was to confer upon the ruined peer a splendid dowry, that would smooth all obstacles in the ascent of his ambition. From Mr. Douce he learned that the deeds, which were to transfer to himself the baronial possessions of the head of the house of Maltravers, were nearly completed; and, on his wedding-day, he hoped to be able to announce that the happy pair had set out for their princely mansion of Lisle Court. In politics—though nothing could be finally settled till his return—letters from Lord Saxingham assured him that all was auspicious: the court and the heads of the aristocracy daily growing more alienated from the premier, and more prepared for a cabinet revolution. And Vargrave, perhaps, like most needy men, over-rated the advantages he should derive from, and the servile opinions he should conciliate in, his new character of landed proprietor and wealthy peer.

He was not insensible to the silent anguish that Evelyn seemed to endure, nor to the bitter gloom that hung on the brow of Lady Doltimore. But these were clouds that foretold no storm—light shadows that obscured not the serenity of the favoring sky. He continued to seem unconscious to either; to take the coming event as a matter of course, and to Evelyn he evinced so gentle, unfamiliar, respectful, and delicate an attachment, that he left no opening, either for confidence or complaint. Poor Evelyn! her gaiety, her enchanting levity, her sweet and infantine playfulness of manner, were indeed vanished. Pale, wan, passive, and smileless, she was the ghost of her former self! But days rolled on, and the evil one drew near: she recoiled, but she never dreamt of resisting. How many equal victims of her age and sex does the altar witness!

One day, at early noon, Lord Vargrave took his way to Evelyn's. He had been to pay a political visit in the Faubourg St. Germain's, and he was now slowly crossing the more quiet and solitary part of the gardens of the Tuileries—his hands clasped behind him, after his old, unaltered habit, and his eyes downcast—when, suddenly, a man, who was seated alone beneath one of the trees, and who had for some moments watched his steps with an anxious and wild aspect, rose and approached him. Lord Vargrave was not conscious of the intrusion, till the man laid his hand on Vargrave's arm, and, exclaimed—

"It is he!—it is! Lumley Ferrers, we meet again!"

Lord Vargrave started and changed color, as he gazed on the intruder.

"Ferrers," continued Cesarini (for it was he), and he wound his arm firmly into Lord Vargrave's as he spoke; "you have not changed; your step is light—your cheek healthful; and yet I!—you can scarcely recognize me. Oh, I have suffered so horribly since we parted! Why is this—why have I been so heavily visited?—and why have you gone free? Heaven is not just!"

Castruccio was in one of his lucid intervals; but there was that in his uncertain eye, and strange unnatural voice, which showed that a breath may dissolve the avalanche. Lord Vargrave looked anxiously round; none were near: but he knew that the more public parts

of the garden were thronged, and through the trees he saw many forms moving in the distance. He felt that the sound of his voice could summon assistance in an instant, and his assurance returned to him.

"My poor friend," said he soothingly, as he quickened his pace, "it grieves me to the heart to see you look ill: do not think so much of what is past."

"There is no past!" replied Cesarini, gloomily. "The Past is my Present! And I have thought and thought, in darkness and in chains, over all that I have endured—and a light has broken on me in the hours when they told me I was mad! Lumley Ferrers, it was not for my sake that you led me, devil as you are, into the lowest hell! You had some object of your own to serve in separating *her* from Maltravers. You made me your instrument. What was I to you that you should have sinned for *my* sake? Answer me, and truly—if those lips can utter truth!"

"Cesarini," returned Vargrave, in his blandest accents, "another time we will converse on what has been; believe me, my only object was your happiness, combined, it may be, with my hatred of your rival."

"Liar!" shouted Cesarini, grasping Vargrave's arm with the strength of growing madness, while his burning eyes were fixed upon his tempter's changing countenance. "You, too, loved Florence—you, too, sought her hand—*you* were my real rival!"

"Hush! my friend, hush!" said Vargrave, seeking to shake off the gripe of the maniac, and becoming seriously alarmed;—"we are approaching the crowded part of the gardens, we shall be observed."

"And why are men made my foes? Why is my own sister become my persecutor? why should she give me up to the torturer and the dungeon? Why are serpents and fiends my comrades? Why is there fire in my brain and heart? and why do you go free and enjoy liberty and life? Observed!—what care *you* for observation? All men search for *me!*"

"Then why so openly expose yourself to their notice?—why——"

"Hear me!" interrupted Cesarini, "When I escaped from the horrible prison into which I was plunged—when I scented the fresh air, and bounded over the grass—when I was again free in limbs and spirit—a sudden strain of music from a village came on my ear, and I stopped short, and couched down, and held my breath to listen. It ceased; and I thought I had been with Florence, and I wept bitterly! When I recovered, memory came back to me distinct and clear: and I heard a voice say to me, 'Avenge her and thyself!' From that hour the voice has been heard again, morning and night! Lumley Ferres, I hear it now! it speaks to my heart—it warms my blood—it nerves my hand! On whom should vengeance fall? Speak to me!"

Lumley strode rapidly on: they were now without the grove: a gay throng was before them. "All is safe," thought the Englishman. He turned abruptly and haughtily on Cesarini, and waved his hand;—"Begone, madman!" said he, in a loud and stern voice,—"begone! vex me no more, or I give you into custody. Begone, I say!"

Cesarini halted, amazed and awed for the moment: and then, with a dark scowl and a low cry, threw himself on Vargrave. The eye and hand of the latter were vigilant and prepared: he grasped the lifted arm of the maniac, and shouted for help. But the madman was now in his full fury;—he hurled Vargrave to the ground with a force for which the peer was not prepared—and Lumley might never have risen a living man from that spot, if two soldiers, seated close by, had not hastened to his assistance. Cesarini was already kneeling on his breast, and his long bony fingers were fastening upon the throat of his intended victim. Torn from his hold, he glared fiercely on his new assailants; and, after a fierce but momentary struggle, wrested himself from their gripe. Then, turning round to Vargrave, who had with some effort risen from the ground, he shrieked out, "I shall have thee yet!" and fled through the trees and disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

"Ah! who is nigh?—Come to me, friend or foe!
My parks, my walks, my manors that I had—
Ev'n now forsake me."—*Henry VI.*, Third Part.

LORD VARGRAVE, bold as he was by nature, in vain endeavored to banish from his mind the gloomy impression which the startling in-

terview with Cesarini had bequeathed. The face, the voice of his maniac, haunted him, as the shape of the warning wraith haunts the mountaineer. He returned at once to his hotel, unable for some hours to collect himself sufficiently to pay his customary visit to Miss Cameron. Inly resolving not to hazard a second meeting with the Italian during the rest of his sojourn at Paris, by venturing in the streets on foot, he ordered his carriage towards evening—dined at the *Café de Paris;* and then re-entered his carriage to proceed to Lady Doltimore's house.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," said his servant, as he closed the carriage door, "but I forgot to say that, a short time after you returned this morning, a strange gentleman asked at the porter's lodge if Mr. Ferrers was not staying at the hotel, The porter said there was no Mr. Ferrers—but the gentleman insisted upon it that he had seen Mr. Ferrers enter. I was in the lodge at the moment, my lord, and I explained——"

"That Mr. Ferrers and Lord Vargrave are one and the same? What sort of looking person!"

"Thin and dark, my lord—evidently a foreigner. When I said that you were now Lord Vargrave, he stared a moment, and said very abruptly, that he recollected it perfectly—and then he laughed and walked away."

"Did he not ask to see me?"

"No, my lord;—he said he should take another opportunity. He was a strange-looking gentleman—and his clothes were threadbare."

"Ah! some troublesome petitioner. Perhaps a Pole in distress! Remember I am never at home when he calls. Shut the door. To Lady Doltimore's."

Lumley's heart beat as he threw himself back—he again felt the gripe of the madman at his throat. He saw, at once, that Cesarini had dogged him—he resolved the next morning to change his hotel and apply to the police. It was strange how sudden and keen a fear had entered the breast of this callous and resolute man!

On arriving at Lady Doltimore's, he found Caroline alone in the drawing-room. It was a *tête-à-tête* that he by no means desired.

"Lord Vargrave," said Caroline, coldly, "I wished a short conversation with you—and, finding you did not come in the morning, I sent you a note an hour ago. Did you receive it?"

"No—I have been from home since six o'clock—it is now nine."

"Well, then, Vargrave," said Caroline, with a compressed and writing lip, and turning very pale—"I tremble to tell you that I fear Doltimore suspects. He looked at me sternly this morning, and said, 'You seem unhappy, madam—this marriage of Lord Vargrave's distresses you!'"

"I warned you how it would be—your own selfishness will betray and ruin you."

"Do not reproach me, man!" said Lady Doltimore, with great vehemence. "From you at least I have a right to pity—to forbearance—to succor. I will not bear reproach from *you*."

"I reproach you for your own sake—for the faults you commit against yourself—and I must say, Caroline, that after I had generously conquered all selfish feeling, and assisted you to so desirable and even brilliant a position, it is neither just nor high-minded in you to evince so ungracious a reluctance to my taking the only step which can save me from actual ruin. But what does Doltimore suspect? What ground has he for suspicion, beyond that want of command of countenance which it is easy to explain—and which it is yet easier for a woman and a great lady (here Lumley sneered) to acquire?"

"I know not—it has been put into his head. Paris is so full of slander. But—Vargrave—Lumley—I tremble—I shudder with terror—if ever Doltimore should discover"——

"Pooh—pooh! Our conduct at Paris has been most guarded—most discreet. Doltimore is Self-conceit personified—and Self-conceit is horn-eyed. I am about to leave Paris—about to marry, from under your own roof;—a little prudence—a little self-control—a smiling face, when you wish us happiness, and so forth, and all is safe. Tush! think of it no more—Fate has cut and shuffled the cards for you—the game is yours, unless you revoke—pardon my metaphor—it is a favorite one—I have worn it threadbare—but human life *is* so like a rubber at whist. Where is Evelyn?"

"In her own room. Have you no pity for her?"

"She will be very happy when she is Lady

Vargrave; and for the rest, I shall neither be a stern nor a jealous husband. She might not have given the same character to the magnificent Maltravers."

Here Evelyn entered; and Vargrave hastened to press her hand—to whisper tender salutations and compliments—to draw the easy chair to the fire—to place the footstool;—to lavish the *petits soins* that are so agreeable, when they are the small moralities of love.

Evelyn was more than usually pale—more than usually abstracted. There was no lustre in her eye—no life in her step: she seemed unconscious of the crisis to which she approached. As the myrrh and hyssop which drugged the malefactors of old into forgetfulness of their doom, so there are griefs which stupify before their last and crowning consummation!

Vargrave conversed lightly on the weather, the news, the last book. Evelyn answered but in monosyllables; and Caroline with a hand-screen before her face, preserved an unbroken silence. Thus, gloomy and joyless were two of the party—thus, gay and animated the third, when the clock on the mantel-piece struck ten; and, as the last stroke died, and Evelyn sighed heavily—for it was an hour nearer to the fatal day—the door was suddenly thrown open, and, pushing aside the servant, two gentlemen entered the room.

Caroline, the first to perceive them, started from her seat with a faint exclamation of surprise. Vargrave turned abruptly, and saw before him the stern countenance of Maltravers.

"My child!—my Evelyn!" exclaimed a familiar voice; and Evelyn had already flown into the arms of Aubrey.

The sight of the curate, in company with Maltravers, explained all at once to Vargrave. He saw that the mask was torn from his face the prize snatched from his grasp—his falsehood known—his plot counter-worked—his villany baffled! He struggled in vain for self-composure—all his resources of courage and craft seemed drained and exhausted. Livid, speechless, almost trembling,—he cowered beneath the eyes of Maltravers.

Evelyn, not as yet aware of the presence of her former lover, was the first to break the silence. She lifted her face in alarm from the bosom of the good curate—"My mother—she is well—she lives—what brings you hither?"

"Your mother is well, my child. I have come hither at her earnest request, to save you from a marriage with that unworthy man!"

Lord Vargrave smiled a ghastly smile, but made no answer.

"Lord Vargrave," said Maltravers, "you will feel at once that you have no furthur business under this roof. Let us withdraw—I have much to thank you for."

"I will not stir!" exclaimed Vargrave passionately, and stamping on the floor. "Miss Cameron, the guest of Lady Doltimore, whose house and presence you thus rudely profane, is my affianced bride—affianced with her own consent. Evelyn — beloved Evelyn! mine you are yet—you alone can cancel the bond. Sir, I know not what you have to say—what mystery in your immaculate life to disclose; but unless Lady Doltimore, whom your violence appals and terrifies, orders me to quit her roof, it is not I—it is yourself, who are the intruder! Lady Doltimore, with your permission, I will direct your servants to conduct this gentleman to his carriage!"

"Lady Doltimore, pardon me," said Maltravers, coldly; "I will not he urged to any failure of respect to you. My lord, if the most abject cowardice be not added to your other vices, you will not make this room the theatre for our altercation. I invite you, in those terms which no gentleman ever yet refused, to withdraw with me."

The tone and manner of Maltravers exercised a strange control over Vargrave; he endeavored in vain to keep alive the passion into which he had sought to work himself—his voice faltered, his head sunk upon his breast. Between these two personages, none interfered;—around them, all present grouped in breathless silence: Caroline, turning her eyes from one to the other in wonder and dismay; Evelyn, believing all a dream, yet alive only to the thought that, by some merciful interposition of Providence, she should escape the consequences of her own rashness—clinging to Aubrey, with her gaze riveted on Maltravers; and Aubrey, whose gentle character was borne down and silenced by the powerful and tempestuous passions that now met in collision and conflict, withheld by his abhorrence of Vargrave's treachery from his natural desire to propitiate, and yet appalled by the apprehen-

sion of bloodshed, that for the first time crossed him.

There was a moment of dead silence, in which Vargrave seemed to be nerving and collecting himself for such course as might be best to pursue, when again the door opened, and the name of Mr. Howard was announced.

"Hurried and agitated, the young secretary, scarcely noticing the rest of the party, rushed to Lord Vargrave.

"My lord!—a thousand pardons for interrupting you—business of such importance!—I am so fortunate to find you!"

"What is the matter, sir?"

"These letters, my lord; I have so much to say!"

Any interruption, even an earthquake, at that moment must have been welcome to Vargrave. He bent his head, with a polite smile, linked his arm into his secretary's, and withdrew to the recess of the furthest window. Not a minute elapsed, before he turned away with a look of scornful exultation. "Mr. Howard," said he, "go and refresh yourself, and come to me at twelve o'clock to-night; I shall be at home then." The secretary bowed, and withdrew.

"Now, sir," said Vargrave to Maltravers, "I am willing to leave you in poseession of the field. Miss Cameron, it will be, I fear impossible for me to entertain any longer the bright hopes I had once formed; my cruel fate compels me to seek wealth in my matrimonial engagement. I regret to inform you, that you are no longer the great heiress: the whole of your capital was placed in the hands of Mr. Douce for the completion of the purchase of Lisle Court. Mr. Douce is a bankrupt; he has fled to America. This letter is an express from my lawyer; the house has closed its payments!—Perhaps we may hope to obtain sixpence in the pound. I am a loser also; the forfeit money bequeathed to me is gone. I know not whether, as your trustee, I am not accountable for the loss of your fortune (drawn out on my responsibility); probably so. But as I have not now a shilling in the world, I doubt whether Mr. Maltravers will advise you to institute proceedings against me. Mr. Maltravers, to-morrow, at nine o'clock, I will listen to what you have to say. I wish you all good night." He bowed—seized his hat—and vanished.

"Evelyn," said Aubrey, "can you require to learn more—do you not already feel you are released from union with a man without heart and honor?"

"Yes, yes! I am so happy!" cried Evelyn, bursting into tears. "This hated wealth—I feel not its loss—I am released from all duty to my benefactor. I am free!"

The last tie that had yet united the guilty Caroline to Vargrave was broken—a woman forgives sin in her lover, but never meanness. The degrading, the abject position in which she had seen one, whom she had served as a slave, (though, as yet, all his worst villanies were unknown to her), filled her with shame, horror, and disgust. She rose abruptly, and quitted the room. They did not miss her.

Maltravers approached Evelyn; he took her hand, and pressed it to his lips and heart.

"Evelyn," said he, mournfully, "you require an explanation—to-morrow I will give and seek it. To-night we are both too unnerved for such communications. I can only now feel joy at your escape, and hope that I may still minister to your future happiness."

"But," said Aubrey, "can we believe this new and astounding statement? can this loss be so irremediable?—may we not yet take precaution, and save, at least, some wrecks of this noble fortune?"

"I thank you for recalling me to the world," said Maltravers, eagerly. "I will see to it this instant; and to-morrow, Evelyn, after my interview with you, I will hasten to London, and act in that capacity still left to me—your guardian—your friend."

He turned away his face, and hurried to the door.

Evelyn clung more closely to Aubrey—"But you will not leave me to-night?—you can stay—we can find you accommodation—do not leave me."

"Leave you, my child!—no—we have a thousand things to say to each other. I will not," he added in a whisper, turning to Maltravers, "forstall your communications."

CHAPTER III.

"Alack, 'tis he. Why, he was met even now
As mad as the vex'd sea."—*Lear.*

In the Rue de la Paix there resided an English lawyer of eminence, with whom Mal-

travers had had previous dealings,—to this gentleman he now drove. He acquainted him with the news he had just heard, respecting the bankruptcy of Mr. Douce; and commissioned him to leave Paris, the first moment he could obtain a passport, and to proceed to London. At all events, he would arrive there some hours before Maltravers; and those hours were something gained. This done, he drove to the nearest hotel, which chanced to be the Hotel de M——, where, though he knew it not, it so happened that Lord Vargrave himself lodged. As his carriage stopped without, while the porter unclosed the gates, a man, who had been loitering under the lamps, darted forward, and prying into the carriage window, regarded Maltravers earnestly. The latter, preoccupied and absorbed did not notice him; but when the carriage drove into the court-yard, it was followed by the stranger who was muffled in a worn and tattered cloak, and whose movements were unheeded amidst the bustle of the arrival. The porter's wife led the way to a second-floor, just left vacant, and the waiter began to arrange the fire. Maltravers threw himself abstractedly upon the sofa, insensible to all around him—when, lifting his eyes, he saw before him the countenance of Cesarini! The Italian (supposed, perhaps, by the persons of the hotel, to be one of the new-comers) was leaning over the back of a chair, supporting his face with his hand, and fixing his eyes with an earnest and sorrowful expression upon the features of his ancient rival. When he perceived that he was recognized, he approached Maltravers, and said in Italian, and in a low voice, "You are the man of all others, whom, save one, I most desired to see. I have much to say to to you, and my time is short. Spare me a few minutes."

The tone and manner of Cesarini were so calm and rational, that they changed the first impulse of Maltravers, which was that of securing a maniac: while the Italian's emaciated countenance—his squalid garments—the air of penury and want diffused over his whole appearance—irresistibly invited compassion. With all the more anxious and pressing thoughts that weighed upon him, Maltravers could not refuse the conference thus demanded. He dismissed the attendants, and motioned Cesarini to be seated.

The Italian drew near to the fire, which now blazed brightly and cheerily, and, spreading his thin hands to the flame, seemed to enjoy the physical luxury of the warmth. "Cold—cold," he said piteously, as to himself; "Nature is a very bitter protector. But frost and famine are, at least, more merciful than slavery and darkness."

At this moment Ernest's servant entered to know if his master would not take refreshments, for he had scarcely touched food upon the road. And, as he spoke, Cesarini turned keenly and wistfully round. There was no mistaking the appeal. Wine and cold meat were ordered: and when the servant vanished, Cesarini turned to Maltravers with a strange smile, and said,—"You see what the love of liberty brings men to! They found me plenty in the jail! But I have read of men who feasted merrily before execution—have not you?—and my hour is at hand. All this day I have felt chained by an irresistible destiny to this house. But it was not you I sought; no matter, in the crisis of our doom all its agents meet together. It is the last act of a dreary play!"

The Italian turned again to the fire, and bent over it, muttering to himself.

Maltravers remained silent and thoughtful. Now was the moment once more to place the maniac under the kindly vigilance of his family—to snatch him from the horrors, perhaps of starvation itself, to which his escape had condemned him: if he could detain Cesarini till De Montaigne could arrive!

Agreeably to this thought, he quietly drew towards him the port-folio which had been laid on the table—and, Cesarini's back still turned to him, wrote a hasty line to De Montaigne. When his servant re-entered with the wine and viands, Maltravers followed him out of the room, and bade him see the note sent immediately. On returning, he found Cesarini devouring the food before him with all the voracity of famine. It was a dreadful sight!—the intellect ruined—the mind darkened—the wild, fierce animal, alone left!

When Cesarini had appeased his hunger, he drew near to Maltravers, and thus accosted him:—

"I must lead you back to the past. I sinned against you and the dead: but Heaven has avenged you, and me you can pity and for-

give. Maltravers, there is another more guilty than I—but proud, prosperous, and great. *His* crime Heaven has left to the revenge of man!——I bound myself by an oath not to reveal his villany. I cancel the oath now, for the knowledge of it should survive his life and mine. And, mad though they deem me—the mad are prophets—and a solemn conviction, a voice not of earth, tells me that he and I are already in the Shadow of Death."

Here Cesarini, with a calm and precise accuracy of self-possession,—a minuteness of circumstance and detail, that, coming from one whose very eyes betrayed his terrible disease, was infinitely thrilling in its effect,—related the counsels, the persuasion, the stratagems of Lumley. Slowly and distinctly he forced into the heart of Maltravers that sickening record of cold fraud, calculating on vehement passion as its tool; and thus he concluded his narration;—

"Now, wonder no longer why I have lived till this hour—why I have clung to freedom, through want and hunger, amidst beggars, felons, and outcasts! In that freedom was my last hope—the hope of revenge!"

Maltravers returned no answer for some moments. At length he said calmly, "Cesarini, there are injuries so great, that they defy revenge. Let us alike, since we are alike injured, trust our cause to Him who reads all hearts, and, better than we can do, measures both crime and its excuses. You think that our enemy has not suffered—that he has gone free. We know not his internal history—prosperity and power are no signs of happiness, they bring no exemption from care. Be soothed and be ruled, Cesarini. Let the stone once more close over the solemn grave. Turn with me to the future; and let us rather seek to be the judges of ourselves, than the executioners of another."

Cesarini listened gloomily, and was about to answer, when——

But here we must return to Lord Vargrave.

CHAPTER IV.

* * * "My noble lord,
Your worthy friends do lack you."
—*Macbeth.*
* * * "He is about it:
The doors are open."—*Ibid.*

On quitting Lady Doltimore's house, Lumley drove to his hotel. His secretary had been the bearer of other communications, with the nature of which he had not yet acquainted himself. But he saw by the superscriptions that they were of great importance. Still, however, even in the solitude and privacy of his own chamber, it was not on the instant that he could divert his thoughts from the ruin of his fortunes: the loss not only of Evelyn's property, but his own claims upon it (for the whole capital had been placed in Douce's hands)—the total wreck of his grand scheme—the triumph he had afforded to Maltravers! He ground his teeth in impotent rage, and groaned aloud, as he traversed his room with hasty and uneven strides. At last he paused and muttered, "Well the spider toils on even when its very power of weaving fresh webs is exhausted; it lies in wait—it forces itself into the webs of others. Brave insect, thou art my model!—While I have breath in my body, the world and all its crosses—Fortune and all her malignity — shall not prevail against me! What man ever yet failed until he himself grew craven, and sold his soul to the arch fiend, Despair!—'Tis but a girl and a fortune lost—they were gallantly fought for, that is some comfort. Now to what is yet left to me!"

The first letter Lumley opened was from Lord Saxingham. It filled him with dismay. The question at issue had been formally, but abruptly, decided in the cabinet against Vargrave and his manœuvres. Some hasty expression of Lord Saxingham had been instantly caught at by the premier, and a resignation, rather hinted at than declared, had been peremptorily accepted. Lord Saxingham and Lumley's adherents in the government were to a man dismissed; and, at the time Lord Saxingham wrote, the premier was with the king.

"Curse their folly!—the puppets!—the dolts!" exclaimed Lumley crushing the letter in his hand. "The moment I leave them, they run their heads against the wall. Curse

them—curse myself—curse the man who weaves ropes with sand! Nothing—nothing left for me, but exile or suicide!—Stay, what is this?"—His eye fell on the well-known hand-writing of the premier. He tore the envelope, impatient to know the worst. His eyes sparkled as he proceeded. The letter was most courteous, most complimentary, most wooing. The minister was a man consummately versed in the arts that increase, as well as those which purge, a party. Saxingham and his friends were imbeciles—incapables—mostly men who had outlived their day. But Lord Vargrave, in the prime of life—versatile, accomplished, vigorous, bitter, unscrupulous—Vargrave was of another mould—Vargrave was to be dreaded; and, therefore, if possible, to be retained. His powers of mischief were unquestionably increased by the universal talk of London, that he was about soon to wed so wealthy a lady. The minister knew his man. In terms of affected regret, he alluded to the loss the government would sustain in the services of Lord Saxingham, etc.—he rejoiced that Lord Vargrave's absence from London had prevented his being prematurely mixed up, by false scruples of honor, in secessions which his judgment must condemn. He treated of the question in dispute with the most delicate address confessed the reasonableness of Lord Vargrave's former opposition to it; but contended that it was now, if not wise, inevitable. He said nothing of the *justice* of the measure he proposed to adopt, but much on the *expediency*. He concluded by offering to Vargrave, in the most cordial and flattering terms, the very seat in the cabinet which Lord Saxingham had vacated, with an apology for its inadequacy to his lordship's merits, and a distinct and definite promise of the refusal of the gorgeous viceroyalty of India—which would be vacant next year, by the return of the present governor-general.

Unprincipled as Vargrave was, it is not, perhaps, judging him too mildly to say, that had he succeeded in obtaining Evelyn's hand and fortune, he would have shrunk from the baseness he now meditated. To step coldly into the very post of which he, and he alone, had been the cause of depriving his earliest patron and nearest relative—to profit by the betrayal of his own party—to damn himself eternally in the eyes of his ancient friends—to pass down the stream of history as a mercenary apostate; from all this Vargrave must have shrunk, had he seen one spot of honest ground on which to maintain his footing. But now the waters of the abyss were closing over his head; he would have caught at a straw: how much more consent to be picked up by the vessel of an enemy! All objection, all scruple, vanished at once. And the "barbaric gold" "of Ormus and of Ind" glittered before the greedy eyes of the penniless adventurer! Not a day was now to be lost: how fortunate that a written proposition, from which it was impossible to recede, had been made to him, before the failure of his matrimonial projects had become known! Too happy to quit Paris, he would set off on the morrow, and conclude in person the negotiation. Vargrave glanced towards the clock, it was scarcely past eleven; what revolutions are worked in moments! Within an hour he had lost a wife—a noble fortune—changed the politics of his whole life—stepped into a cabinet office—and was already calculating how much a governor-general of India could lay by in five years! But it was only eleven o'clock—he had put off Mr. Howard's visit till twelve—he wished so much to see him, and learn all the London gossip connected with the recent events. Poor Mr. Douce!—Vargrave had already forgotten *his* existence!—he rang his bell hastily. It was some time before his servant answered.

Promptitude and readiness were virtues that Lord Vargrave peremptorily demanded in a servant; and as he paid the best price for the articles—less in wages than in plunder—he was generally sure to obtain them.

"Where the deuce have you been? this is the third time I have rung! you ought to be in the ante-room!"

"I beg your lordship's pardon; but I was helping Mr. Maltravers' valet to find a key which he dropped in the court-yard."

"Mr. Maltravers! Is he at this hotel?"

"Yes, my lord; his rooms are just over head."

"Humph!—Has Mr. Howard engaged a lodging here?"

"No, my lord. He left word that he was gone to his aunt, Lady Jane."

"Ah!—Lady Jane—lives at Paris—so she

does—Rue Chaussée d'Antin—you know the house?—go immediately—go yourself!—don't trust to a messenger—and beg Mr. Howard to return with you. I want to see him instantly."

"Yes, my lord."

The servant went. Lumley was in a mood in which solitude was intolerable. He was greatly excited; and some natural compunctions at the course on which he had decided made him long to escape from thought. So Maltravers was under the same roof! He had promised to give him an interview next day; but next day he wished to be on the road to London. Why not have it over to-night? But could Maltravers meditate any hostile proceedings?—impossible! Whatever his causes of complaint, they were of too delicate and secret a nature for seconds, bullets, and newspaper paragraphs! Vargrave might feel secure that he should not be delayed by any Bois de Boulogne assignation; but it was necessary to *his honor* (!) that he should not seem to shun the man he had deceived and wronged. He would go up to him at once—a new excitement would distract his thoughts. Agreeably to this resolution, Lord Vargrave quitted his room, and was about to close the outer door, when he recollected that perhaps his servant might not meet with Howard—that the secretary might probably arrive before the time fixed—it would be as well to leave his door open. He accordingly stopped, and writing upon a piece of paper "Dear Howard, send up for me the moment you arrive: I shall be with Mr. Maltravers *au second*"—Vargrave waffered the *affiche* to the door, which he then left ajar, and the lamp in the landing-place fell clear and full on the paper.

It was the voice of Vargrave, in the little stone-paven ante-chamber without, iuquiring of the servant if Mr. Maltravers was at home, which had startled and interrupted Cesarini as he was about to reply to Ernest. Each recognized that sharp clear voice—each glanced at the other.

"I will not see him," said Maltravers, hastily moving towards the door; "you are not fit to——"

"Meet him? no!" said Cesarini, with a furtive and sinister glance, which a man versed in his disease would have understood, but which Maltravers did not even observe; "I will retire into the bed-room; my eyes are heavy—I could sleep."

He opened the inner door as he spoke, and had scarcely re-closed it before Vargrave entered.

"Your servant said you were engaged; but I thought you might see an old friend:" and Vargrave coolly seated himself.

Maltravers drew the bolt across the door that separated them from Cesarini; and the two men, whose characters and lives were so strongly contrasted, were now alone.

"You wished an interview—an explanation," said Lumley; "I shrink from neither. Let me forestall inquiry and complaint. I deceived you knowingly and deliberately, it is quite true—all stratagems are fair in love and war. The prize was vast! I believed my career depended on it; I could not resist the temptation. I knew that before long you would learn that Evelyn was not your daughter; that the first communication between yourself and Lady Vargrave would betray me; but it was worth trying a *coup de main*. You have foiled me, and conquered:—be it so; I congratulate you. You are tolerably rich, and the loss of Evelyn's fortune will not vex you as it would have done me."

"Lord Vargrave, it is but poor affectation to treat thus lightly the dark falsehood you conceived, the awful curse you inflicted upon me! Your sight is now so painful to me—it so stirs the passions that I would seek to suppress, that the sooner our interview is terminated the better. I have to charge you, also, with a crime—not, perhaps, baser than the one you so calmly own, but the consequences of which were more fatal: you understand me?"

"I do not."

"Do not tempt me! do not lie!" said Maltravers, still in a calm voice, though his passions, naturally so strong, shook his whole frame. "To your arts I owe the exile of years that should have been better spent;—to those arts Cesarini owes the wreck of his reason, and Florence Lascelles her early grave! Ah! you are pale now; your tongue cleaves to your mouth! And think you these crimes will go for ever unrequited? think you that there is no justice in the thunderbolts of God?"

"Sir," said Vargrave, starting to his feet; "I know not what you suspect, I care not

what you believe! But I am accountable to man, and that acconnt I am willing to render. You threatened me in the presence of my ward; you spoke of cowardice, and hinted at danger. Whatever my faults, want of courage is not one. Stand by your threats—I am ready to brave them!"

"A year, perhaps a short month ago," replied Maltravers, "and I would have arrogated justice to my own mortal hand; nay, this very night, had the hazard of either of our lives been necessary to save Evelyn from your persecution, I would have incurred all things for her sake!" But that is past; from me you have nothing to fear. The proofs of your earlier guilt, with its dreadful results, would alone suffice to warn me from the solemn responsibility of human vengeance! Great Heavens! what hand could dare to send a criminal so long hardened, so black with crime, unatoning, unrepentant, and unprepared, before the judgment-seat of the ALL JUST? Go, unhappy man! may life long be spared to you! Awake—awake from this world, before your feet pass the irrevocable boundary of the next!"

"I came not here to listen to homilies, and the cant of the conventicle," said Vargrave, vainly struggling for a haughtiness of mien that his conscience-stricken aspect terribly belied; "not I—but this wrong World is to be blamed, if deeds that strict morality may not justify, but the effects of which I, no prophet, could not forsee, were necessary for success in life. I have been but as all other men have been who struggle against fortune, to be rich and great:—ambition must make use of foul ladders."

"Oh!" said Maltravers, earnestly, touched involuntarily, and in spite of his abhorrence of the criminal, by the relenting that this miserable attempt at self-justification seemed to denote, —"Oh! be warned while it is yet time; wrap not yourself in these paltry sophistries; look back to your past career; see to what heights you might have climbed, if—with those rare gifts and energies—with that subtle sagacity and indomitable courage—your ambition had but chosen the straight, not the crooked, path. Pause! many years may yet, in the course of nature, afford you time to retrace your steps—to atone to thousands the injuries you have inflicted on the few. I know not why I thus address you: but something diviner than indignation urges me; something tells me that you are already on the brink of the abyss!"

Lord Vargrave changed color, nor did he speak for some moments; then raising his head, with a faint smile, he said, "Maltravers, you are a false soothsayer. At this moment my paths, crooked though they be, have led me far toward the summit of my proudest hopes—the straight path would have left me at the foot of the mountain! You yourself are a beacon against the course you advise. Let us contrast each other. You took the straight path: I the crooked. You, my superior in fortune; you, infinitely above me in genius; you, born to command and never to crouch; how do we stand now, each in the prime of life? You, with a barren and profitless reputation; without rank, without power—almost without the hope of power. I — but you know not my new dignity—I, in the cabinet of England's ministry—vast fortunes opening to my gaze—the proudest station not too high for my reasonable ambition! You, wedding yourself to some grand chimera of an object — aimless — when it eludes your grasp. I, swinging, squirrel-like, from scheme to scheme; no matter if one breaks, another is at hand! Some men would have cut their throats in despair, an hour ago, in losing the object of a seven years' chase—Beauty and Wealth both! I open a letter, and find success in one quarter to counterbalance failure in another. Bah! bah! each to his *métier*, Maltravers! For you, honor, melancholy, and, if it please you, repentance also! For me, the onward, rushing life, never looking back on the Past, never balancing the stepping-stones to the Future. Let us not envy each other: if you were not Diogenes, you would be Alexander. Adieu! our interview is over. Will you forget and forgive, and shake hands once more? You draw back—you frown! well, perhaps you are right. If we meet again——"

"It will be as strangers."

"No rash vows! you may return to politics—you may want office. I am of your way of thinking now: and—ha! ha!—poor Lumley Ferrers could make you a Lord of the Treasury: smooth travelling, and cheap turn-pikes on crooked paths, believe me.—Farewell!"

On entering the room into which Cesarini had retired, Maltravers found him flown. His servant said that the gentleman had gone away shortly after Lord Vargrave's arrival. Ernest reproached himself bitterly for neglecting to secure the door that conducted to the ante-chamber; but still it was probable that Cesarini would return in the morning.

The messenger who had taken the letter to De Montaigne brought back word that the latter was at his villa, but expected at Paris early the next day. Maltravers hoped to see him before his departure: meanwhile he threw himself on his bed, and, despite all the anxieties that yet oppressed him, the fatigues and excitements he had undergone exhausted even the endurance of that iron frame, and he fell into a profound slumber.

CHAPTER V.

"By eight to-morrow
Thou shalt be made immortal."
—*Measure for Measure.*

LORD VARGRAVE returned to his apartment, to find Mr. Howard, who had but just that instant arrived, warming his white and well-ringed hands by the fire. He conversed with him for half an hour on all the topics on which the secretary could give him information, and then dismissed him once more to the roof of Lady Jane.

As he slowly undressed himself, he saw on his writing-table the note which Lady Doltimore had referred to, and which he had not yet opened. He lazily broke the seal, ran his eye carelessly over its few blotted words of remorse and alarm, and threw it down again with a contemptuous "pshaw!" Thus unequally are the sorrows of a guilty tie felt by the man of the world and the woman of society!

As his servant placed before him his wine and water, Vargrave told him to see early to the preparations for departure, and to call him at nine o'clock.

"Shall I shut that door, my lord?" said the valet, pointing to one that communicated with one of those large closets, or *armoires*, that are common appendages to French bedrooms, and in which wood and sundry other matters are kept.

"No," said Lord Vargrave, petulantly; "you servants are so fond of excluding every breath of air. I should never have a window open, if I did not open it myself. Leave the door as it is; and do not be later than nine to-morrow."

The servant, who slept in a kind of kennel, that communicated with the ante-room, did as he was bid; and Vargrave put out his candle, betook himself to bed, and, after drowsily gazing some minutes on the dying embers of the fire, which threw a dim, ghastly light over the chamber, fell fast asleep. The clock struck the first hour of morning, and in that house all seemed still.

The next morning, Maltravers was disturbed from his slumber by De Montaigne, who, arriving, as was often his wont, at an early hour from his villa, had found Ernest's note of the previous evening.

Maltravers rose, and dressed himself; and, while De Montaigne was yet listening to the account which his friend gave of his adventure with Cesarini, and the unhappy man's accusation of his accomplice, Ernest's servant entered the room very abruptly.

"Sir," said he, "I thought you might like to know,—what is to be done?—the whole hotel is in confusion—Mr. Howard has been sent for,—and Lord Doltimore—so very strange, so sudden!"

"What is the matter? speak plain."

"Lord Vargrave, sir — poor Lord Vargrave——"

"Lord Vargrave!"

"Yes, sir; the master of the hotel, hearing you knew his lordship, would be so glad if you would come down. Lord Vargrave, sir, is dead—found dead in his bed!"

Maltravers was rooted to the spot with amaze and horror. Dead! and but last night so full of life and schemes, and hope, and ambition!

As soon as he recovered himself, he hurried to the spot, and De Montaigne followed. The latter, as they descended the stairs, laid his hand on Ernest's arm, and detained him.

"Did you say that Castruccio left the apartment while Vargrave was with you, and almost immediately after his narrative of Vargrave's instigation to his crime?"

"Yes."

The eyes of the friends met—a terrible suspicion possessed both.

"No—it is impossible!" exclaimed Maltravers. "How could he obtain entrance—how pass Lord Vargrave's servants? No, no—think of it not."

They hurried down the stairs—they reached the outer door of Vargrave's apartment—the notice to Howard, with the name of Vargrave underscored, was still on the panels—De Montaigne saw and shuddered.

They were in the room by the bedside—a group were collected round—they gave way as the Englishman and his friend approached; and the eyes of Maltravers suddenly rested on the face of Lord Vargrave, which was locked, rigid, and convulsed.

There was a buzz of voices which had ceased at the entrance of Maltravers—it was now renewed. A surgeon had been summoned—the nearest surgeon—a young Englishman, of no great repute or name. He was making inquiries as he bent over the corpse.

"Yes, sir," said Lord Vargrave's servant, "his lordship told me to call him at nine o'clock. I came in at that hour, but his lordship did not move nor answer me. I then looked to see if he were very sound asleep, and I saw that the pillows had got somehow over his face, and his head seemed to lie very low; so I moved the pillows, and I saw that his lordship was dead."

"Sir, said the surgeon, turning to Maltravers, "you were a friend of his lordship's, I hear. I have already sent for Mr. Howard and Lord Doltimore. Shall I speak with you a minute?"

Maltravers nodded assent. The surgeon cleared the room of all but himself, De Montaigne, and Maltravers.

"Has that servant lived long with Lord Vargrave?" asked the surgeon.

"I believe so—yes—I recollect his face—why?"

"And you think him safe and honest?"

"I don't know—I know nothing of him."

"Look here, sir,"—and the surgeon pointed to a slight discoloration on one side the throat of the dead man. "This may be accidental—purely natural—his lordship may have died in a fit—there are no certain marks of outward violence—but suffocation by murder might still ——"

"But who beside the servant could gain admission? Was the outer door closed?"

"The servant can take oath that he shut the door before going to bed, and that no one was with his lordship, or in the rooms, when Lord Vargrave retired to rest. Entrance from the windows is impossible. Mind, sir, I do not think I have any right to suspect any one. His lordship had been in very ill health a short time before; had had, I hear, a rush of blood to the head. Certainly, if the servant be innocent, we can suspect no one else. You had better send for more experienced practitioners."

De Montaigne, who had hitherto said nothing, now looked with a hurried glance around the room: he perceived the closet-door, which was ajar, and rushed to it, as by an involuntary impulse. The closet was large, but a considerable pile of wood, and some lumber of odd chairs and tables, took up a great part of the space. De Montaigne searched behind and amidst this litter with trembling haste—no trace of secreted murder was visible. He returned to the bed-room with a satisfied and relieved expression of countenance. He then compelled himself to approach the body, from which he had hitherto recoiled.

"Sir," said he almost harshly, as he turned to the surgeon, "what idle doubts are these! Cannot men die in their beds—of sudden death,—no blood to stain their pillows,—no loop-hole for crime to pass through, but we must have science itself startling, us with silly terrors? As for the servant, I will answer for his innocence—his manner—his voice attest it." The surgeon drew back, abashed and humbled, and began to apologize — to qualify, when Lord Doltimore abruptly entered.

"Good heavens!" said he, "what is this? What do I hear? Is it possible? Dead! So suddenly!" He cast a hurried glance at the body—shivered — and sickened—and threw himself into a chair, as if to recover the shock. When again he removed his hand from his face, he saw lying before him on the table an open note. The character was familiar,—his own name struck his eye,—it was the note which Caroline had sent the day before. Andon one heeded him, Lord Doltimore read on, and possessed himself of the proof of his wife's guilt unseen.

The surgeon, now turning from De Montaigne, who had been rating him soundly for

the last few moments, addressed himself to Lord Doltimore. "Your lordship," said he, "was, I hear, Lord Vargrave's most intimate friend at Paris."

"I *his* intimate friend!" said Doltimore, coloring highly, and in a disdainful accent. "Sir, you are misinformed."

"Have you no orders to give, then, my lord?"

"None, sir. My presence here is quite useless Good-day to you, gentlemen."

"With whom, then, do the last duties rest?" said the surgeon, turning to Maltravers and De Montaigne. "With the late lord's secretary?—I expect him every moment;—and here he is, I suppose,"—as Mr. Howard, pale, and evidently overcome by his agitation, entered the apartment. Perhaps, of all the human beings whom the ambitious spirit of that senseless clay had drawn around it by the webs of interest, affection, or intrigue, that young man, whom it had never been a temptation to Vargrave to deceive or injure, and who missed only the gracious and familiar patron, mourned most his memory, and defended most the character. The grief of the poor secretary was now indeed over-mastering. He sobbed and wept like a child.

When Maltravers retired from the chamber of death, De Montaigne accompanied him; but, soon quitting him again, as Ernest bent his way to Evelyn, he quietly rejoined Mr. Howard, who readily grasped at his offers of aid in the last melancholy duties and directions.

CHAPTER VI.

"If we do meet again, why we shall smile."
—*Julius Cæsar.*

THE interview with Evelyn was long and painful. It was reserved for Maltravers to break to her the news of the sudden death of Lord Vargrave, which shocked her unspeakably; and this, which made their first topic, removed much constraint and deadened much excitement in those which followed.

Vargrave's death served also to relieve Maltravers from a most anxious embarrassment. He need no longer fear that Alice would be degraded in the eyes of Evelyn. Henceforth the secret that identified the erring Alice Darvil with the spotless Lady Vargrave was safe, known only to Mrs. Leslie and to Aubrey. In the course of nature, all chance of its disclosure must soon die with them;—and should Alice at last become his wife;—and should Cleveland suspect (which was not probable) that Maltravers had returned to his first love, he knew that he might depend on the inviolable secrecy of his earliest friend.

The tale that Vargrave had told to Evelyn of his early—but, according to that tale, guiltless—passion for Alice, he tacitly confirmed; and he allowed that the recollection of her virtues, and the intelligence of her sorrows, and unextinguishable affection, had made him recoil from a marriage with her supposed daughter. He then proceeded to amaze his young listener with the account of the mode in which he had discovered her real parentage; of which the banker had left to Alice's discretion to inform her, after she had attained the age of eighteen. And then, simply, but with manly and ill-controlled emotion, he touched upon the joy of Alice at beholding him again—upon the endurance and fervor of her love—upon her revulsion of feeling at learning that, in her unforgotten lover, she beheld the recent suitor of her adopted child.

"And now," said Maltravers, in conclusion, "the path to both of us remains the same. To Alice is our first duty. The discovery I have made of your real parentage does not diminish the claims which Alice has on me,—does not lessen the grateful affection that is due to her from yourself. Yes, Evelyn, we are not the less separated for ever. But when I learned the wilful falsehood which the unhappy man, now hurried to his last account—to whom your birth was known, had imposed upon me, viz., that you were the child of Alice—and when I learned also, that you had been hurried into accepting his hand, I trembled at your union with one so false and base.—I came hither resolved to frustrate his schemes, and to save you from an alliance, the motives of which I foresaw, and to which my own letter—my own desertion, had perhaps urged you. New villanies on the part of this most perverted man came to my ear:—but he is dead;—let us spare his memory. For you—oh! still let me deem myself your friend—your more than brother; let me hope now, that I have planted no thorn in that

breast, and that your affection does not shrink from the cold word of friendship."

"Of all the wonders that you have told me," answered Evelyn, as soon as she could recover the power of words, "my most poignant sorrow is, that I have no rightful claim to give a daughter's love to her whom I shall ever idolize as my mother.—Oh! now I see why I thought her affection measured and lukewarm! And have I—I destroyed her joy at seeing you again? But you—you will hasten to console—to reassure her! She loves you still,—she will be happy at last;—and that—that thought—oh! that thought compensates for all!"

There was so much warmth and simplicity in Evelyn's artless manner,—it was so evident that her love for him had not been of that ardent nature, which would at first have superseded every other thought in the anguish of losing him for ever, that the scale fell from the eyes of Maltravers, and he saw at once that his own love had blinded him to the true character of hers. He was human; and a sharp pang shot across his breast. He remained silent for some moments; and then resumed, compelling himself as he spoke, to fix his eyes steadfastly on hers.

"And now, Evelyn—still may I so call you?—I have a duty to discharge to another. You are loved"—and he smiled, but the smile was sad—"by a younger and more suitable lover than I am. From noble and generous motives he suppressed that love—he left you to a rival; the rival removed, dare he venture to explain to you his own conduct, and plead his own motives?—George Legard——" Maltravers paused. The cheek on which he gazed was tinged with a soft blush—Evelyn's eyes were downcast—there was a slight heaving beneath the robe. Maltravers suppressed a sigh and continued. He narrated his interview with Legard at Dover; and, passing lightly over what had chanced at Venice, dwelt with generous eloquence on the magnanimity with which his rival's gratitude had been displayed. Evelyn's eyes sparkled, and the smile just visited the rosy lips and vanished again—the worst, because it was the least selfish, fear of Maltravers was gone; and no vain doubt of Evelyn's too keen regret remained to chill his conscience in obeying its earliest and strongest duties.

"Farewell!" he said, as he rose to depart; "I will at once return to London, and assist in the effort to save your fortune from this general wreck: LIFE calls us back to its cares and business—farewell, Evelyn! Aubrey will, I trust, remain with you still."

"Remain!—Can I not return then to my—to her—yes, let me call her *mother* still?"

"Evelyn," said Maltravers, in a very low voice, "spare me—spare her that pain! Are we yet fit to——" He paused; Evelyn comprehended him, and, hiding her face with her hands, burst into tears.

When Maltravers left the room, he was met by Aubrey, who, drawing him aside, told him that Lord Doltimore had just informed him that it was not his intention to remain at Paris, and had more than delicately hinted at a wish for the departure of Miss Cameron; In this emergency, Maltravers bethought himself of Madame de Ventadour.

No house in Paris was a more eligible refuge—no friend more zealous—no protector would be more kind—no adviser more sincere. To her then he hastened. He briefly informed her of Vargrave's sudden death; and suggested, that for Evelyn to return at once to a sequestered village in England might be a severe trial to spirits already broken; and declared truly, that though his marriage with Evelyn was broken of, her welfare was no less dear to him than heretofore. At his first hint, Valerie, who took a cordial interest in Evelyn for her sake, ordered her own carriage, and drove at once to Lady Doltimore's. His lordship was out—her ladyship was ill—in her own room—could see no one—not even her guest. Evelyn in vain sent up to request an interview; and at last, contenting herself with an affectionate note of farewell, accompanied Aubrey to the home of her new hostess.

Gratified at least to know her with one who would be sure to win her affection, and soothe her spirits, Maltravers set out on his solitary return to England.

Whatever suspicious circumstances might or might not have attended the death of Lord Vargrave, certain it is, that no evidence confirmed, and no popular rumor circulated, them. His late illness, added to the supposed shock of the loss of the fortune he had anticipated with Miss Cameron—aided by the simulta-

neous intelligence of the defeat of the party with whom it was believed he had indissolubly entwined his ambition, sufficed to account, satisfactorily enough, for the melancholy event. De Montaigne, who had been long, though not intimately, acquainted with the deceased, took upon himself all the necessary arrangements, and superintended the funeral; after which ceremony, Howard returned to London: and in Paris, as in the Grave, all things are forgotten! But still in De Montaigne's breast there dwelt a horrible fear. As soon as he had learned from Maltravers the charge the maniac brought against Vargrave, there came upon him the recollection of that day when Cesarini had attempted De Montaigne's life, evidently mistaking him in his delirium for another—and the sullen, cunning, and ferocious character which the insanity had ever afterwards assumed. He had learned from Howard that the outer door had been left a-jar when Lord Vargrave was with Maltravers; the writing on the panel—the name of Vargrave—would have struck Castruccio's eye as he descended the stairs: the the servant was from home—the apartments deserted; he might have won his way into the bed-chamber, concealed himself in the *armoire*, and in the dead of the night, and in the deep and helpless sleep of his victim, have done the deed. What need of weapons?—the suffocating pillows would stop speech and life. What so easy as escape?—to pass into the ante-room—to unbolt the door—to descend into the court-yard—to give the signal to the porter in his lodge, who, without seeing him, would pull the *cordon*, and give him egress unobserved? All this was so possible—so probable.

De Montaigne now withdrew all inquiry for the unfortunate; he trembled at the thought of discovering him—of verifying his awful suspicions—of beholding a murderer in the brother of his wife! But he was not doomed long to entertain fears for Cesarini—he was not fated ever to change suspicion into certainty. A few days after Lord Vargrave's burial, a corpse was drawn from the Seine. Some tablets in the pockets, scrawled over with wild, incoherent verses, gave a clue to the discovery of the dead man's friends; and, exposed at the Morgue, in that bleached and altered clay, De Montaigne recognized the remains of Castruccio Cesarini. "He died and made no sign!"

CHAPTER VII.

"Singula quæque locum teneant sortita." *
—HOR. *Art Poet.*

MALTRAVERS and the lawyers were enabled to save from the insolvent bank, but a very scanty portion of that wealth in which Richard Templeton had rested so much of pride! The title extinct, the fortune gone—so does Fate laugh at our posthumous ambition! Meanwhile Mr. Douce, with a considerable plunder, had made his way to America; the bank owed nearly half-a-million; the purchase-money for Lisle Court, which Mr. Douce had been so anxious to get into his clutches, had not sufficed to stave off the ruin—but a great part of it sufficed to procure competence for himself. How inferior in wit, in acuteness, in stratagem, was Douce to Vargrave—and yet Douce had gulled him like a child! Well said the shrewd small philosopher of France,—"*On peut être plus fin qu'un autre, mais pas plus fin que tous les autres.*" †

To Legard, whom Maltravers had again encountered at Dover, the latter related the downfall of Evelyn's fortunes; and Maltravers loved him when he saw that, far from changing his affection, the loss of wealth seemed rather to raise his hopes. They parted; and Legard set out for Paris.

But was Maltravers all the while forgetful of Alice? He had not been twelve hours in London before he committed to a long and truthful letter all his thoughts—his hopes—his admiring and profound gratitude. Again, and with solemn earnestness, he implored her to accept his hand, and to confirm at the altar, the tale, which had been told to Evelyn. Truly he said, that the shock which his first belief in Vargrave's falsehood had occasioned—his passionate determination to subdue all trace of a love then associated with crime and horror—followed so close by his discovery of Alice's enduring faith and affection—had re-

* To each lot its appropriate place.

† One may be more sharp than one's neighbor, but one can't be sharper than all one's neighbors.—ROCHEFAUCAULT.

moved the image of Evelyn from the throne it had hitherto held in his desires and thoughts;—truly he said, that he was now convinced that Evelyn would soon be consoled for his loss by another, with whom she would be happier than with him;—truly and solemnly he declared that if Alice rejected him still, if even Alice were no more, his suit to Evelyn never could be renewed, and Alice's memory would usurp the place of all living love!

Her answer came; it pierced him to the heart. It was so humble, so grateful, so tender still. Unknown to herself, love yet colored every word; but it was love pained, galled, crushed, and trampled on: it was love, proud from its very depth and purity. His offer was refused.

Months passed away—Maltravers yet trusted to time. The curate had returned to Brook Green, and his letters fed Ernest's hopes and assured his doubts. The more leisure there was left him for reflection, the fainter became those dazzling and rainbow hues in which Evelyn had been robed and surrounded, and the brighter the halo that surrounded his earliest love. The more he pondered on Alice's past history, and the singular beauty of her faithful attachment, the more he was impressed with wonder and admiration—the more anxious to secure to his side one to whom Nature had been so bountiful in all the gifts that make woman the angel and star of life.

Months passed—from Paris the news that Maltravers received confirmed all his expectations—the suit of Legard had replaced his own. It was then that Maltravers began to consider how far the fortune of Evelyn and her destined husband was such as to preclude all anxiety for their future lot. Fortune is so indeterminate in its gauge and measurement. Money, the most elastic of materials, falls short or exceeds, according to the extent of our wants and desires. With all Legard's good qualities, he was constitutionally careless and extravagant; and Evelyn was too inexperienced, and too gentle, perhaps, to correct his tendencies. Maltravers learned that Legard's income was one that required an economy which he feared that, in spite of all his reformation, Legard might not have the self-denial to enforce.

After some consideration, he resolved to add secretly to the remains of Evelyn's fortune such a sum as might—being properly secured to herself and children—lessen whatever danger could arise from the possible improvidence of her husband, and guard against the chance of those embarrassments which are among the worst disturbers of domestic peace. He was enabled to effect this generosity, unknown to both of them, as if the sum bestowed were collected from the wrecks of Evelyn's own wealth, and the profits of the houses in C * * * * *, which of course had not been in involved, in Douce's bankruptcy. And then if Alice were ever his, her jointure, which had been secured on the property appertaining to the villa at Fulham, would devolve upon Evelyn. Maltravers could never accept what Alice owed to another. Poor Alice!—No! not that modest wealth which you had looked upon complacently as one day or other to be his!

Lord Doltimore is travelling in the East,—Lady Doltimore, less adventurous, has fixed her residence in Rome. She has grown thin, and taken to antiquities and rouge. Her spirits are remarkably high—not an uncommon effect of laudanum.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

* * * "Arrived at last
Unto the wished haven."—SHAKESPEARE.

IN the August of that eventful year a bridal party were assembled at the cottage of Lady Vargrave. The ceremony had just been performed, and Ernest Maltravers had bestowed upon George Legard the hand of Evelyn Templeton.

If upon the countenance of him who thus officiated as a father to her he had once wooed as a bride, an observant eye might have noted the trace of mental struggles, it was the trace of struggles past; and the calm had once more settled over the silent deeps. He saw from the casement the carriage that was to bear away the bride to the home of another; the gay faces of the village group, whose intrusion was not forbidden, and to whom that solemn ceremonial was but a joyous pageant; and when he turned once more to those within the chamber, he felt his hand clasped in Legard's

"You have been the preserver of my life—you have been the dispenser of my earthly happiness; all now left to me to wish for is, that you may receive from Heaven the blessings you have given to others!"

"Legard, never let her know a sorrow that you can guard her from; and believe that the husband of Evelyn will be dear to me as a brother!"

And *as* a brother blesses some younger and orphan sister bequeathed and intrusted to a care that should replace a father's, so Maltravers laid his hand lightly on Evelyn's golden tresses, and his lips moved in prayer. He ceased—he pressed his last kiss upon her forehead, and placed her hand in that of her young husband. There was silence—and when to the ear of Maltravers it was broken, it was by the wheels of the carriage, that bore away the wife of George Legard!

The spell was dissolved for ever. And there stood before the lonely man the idol of his early youth, the Alice, still, perhaps, as fair, and once young and passionate, as Evelyn—pale, changed, but lovelier than of old, if heavenly patience and holy thought, and the trials that purify and exalt, can shed over human features something more beautiful than bloom.

The good curate alone was present, besides these two survivors of the error and the love that make the rapture and the misery of so many of our kind. And the old man, after contemplating them a moment, stole unperceived away.

"Alice," said Maltravers, and his voice trembled; "hitherto, from motives too pure and too noble for the practical affections and ties of life, you have rejected the hand of the lover of your youth. Here again I implore you to be mine! Give to my conscience the balm of believing that I can repair to you the evils and the sorrows I have brought upon you. Nay, weep not; turn not away. Each of us stands alone; each of us needs the other. In your heart is locked up all my fondest associations, my brightest memories. In you I see the mirror of what I was when the world was new, ere I had found how Pleasure palls upon us, and Ambition deceives! And me, Alice—ah, you love me still!—Time and absence have but strengthened the chain that binds us. By the memory of our early love—by the grave of our lost child that, had it lived, would have united its parents, I implore you to be mine!"

"Too generous!" said Alice, almost sinking beneath the emotions that shook that gentle spirit and fragile form. "How can I suffer your *compassion*—for it is but compassion—to deceive yourself? You are of another station than I believed you. How can you raise the child of destitution and guilt to your own rank? And shall I—I—who, Heaven knows! would save you from all regret—bring to you now, when years have so changed and broken the little charm I could ever have possessed, this blighted heart and weary spirit?—oh! no, no!" and Alice paused abruptly and tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Be it as you will," said Maltravers, mournfully; "but, at least, ground your refusal upon better motives. Say that now, independent in fortune, and attached to the habits you have formed, you would not hazard your happiness in my keeping—perhaps you are right. To *my* happiness you would indeed contribute; your sweet voice might charm away many a memory and many a thought of the baffled years that have intervened since we parted; your image might dissipate the solitude which is closing round the Future of a disappointed and anxious life. With you, and with you alone, I might yet find a home, a comforter, a charitable and soothing friend. This you could give to me: and with a heart and a form alike faithful to a love that deserved not so enduring a devotion. But I—what can I bestow on you? Your station is equal to my own; your fortune satifies your simple wants. 'Tis true the exchange is not equal, Alice.—Adieu!"

"Cruel!" said Alice, approaching him with timid steps. "If I could—I, so untutored, so unworthy—if I could comfort you in a single care!"

She said no more, but she had said enough; and Maltravers, clasping her to his bosom, felt once more that heart which never, even in thought, had swerved from its early worship, beating against his own!

He drew her gently into the open air. The ripe and mellow noon-day of the last month of summer glowed upon the odorous flowers:—and the broad sea, that stretched beyond and afar, wore upon its solemn waves a golden and happy smile.

"And ah," murmured Alice, softly, as she looked up from his breast; "I ask not if you have loved others since we parted—man's faith is so different from ours—I ask only if you love me now?"

"More! oh, immeasurably more, than in our youngest days," cried Maltravers with fervent passion. "More fondly—more reverently—most trustfully, than I ever loved living being!—even her, in whose youth and innocence I adored the memory of thee! Here have I found that which shames and bankrupts the Ideal! Here have I found a virtue, that, coming at once from God and Nature, has been wiser than all my false philosophy, and firmer than all my pride! You, cradled by misfortune,—your childhood reared amidst scenes of fear and vice, which, while they scared back the intellect, had no pollution for the soul,—your very parent your temper and you foe,—you, only not a miracle and an angel by the stain of one soft and unconscious error,—you, alike through the equal trials of poverty and wealth, have been destined to rise above all triumphant,—the example of the sublime moral that teaches us with what mysterious beauty and immortal holiness the Creator has endowed our human nature, when hallowed by our human affections! You alone suffice to shatter into dust the haughty creeds of the Misanthrope and Pharisee! And your fidelity to my erring self has taught me ever to love, to serve, to compassionate, to respect, the community of God's creatures to which—noble and elevated though you are—you yet belong!"

He ceased, overpowered with the rush of his own thoughts. And Alice was too blest for words. But in the murmur of the sunlit leaves—in the breath of the summer air—in the song of the exulting birds—and the deep and distant music of the heaven-surrounded seas, there went a melodious voice that seemed as if Nature echoed to his words, and blest the reunion of her children.

Maltravers once more entered upon the career so long suspended. He entered with an energy more practical and steadfast than the fitful enthusiasm of former years. And it was noticeable amongst those who knew him well, that, while the firmness of his mind was not impaired, the haughtiness of his temper was subdued. No longer despising Man as he is, and no longer exacting from all things the ideal of a visionary standard, he was more fitted to mix in the living World, and to minister usefully to the great objects that refine and elevate our race. His sentiments were perhaps, less lofty, but his actions were infinitely more excellent, and his theories infinitely more wise.

Stage after stage we have proceeded with him through the MYSTERIES OF LIFE. The Eleusinia are closed, ahd the crowning libation poured.

And Alice!—Will the world blame us if you are left happy at the last? We are daily banishing from our law-books the statutes that disproportion punishment to crime. Daily we preach the doctrine that we demoralize, where ever we strain justice into cruelty. It is time that we should apply to the Social Code the wisdom we recognize in Legislation!—It is time that we should do away with the punishment of death for inadequate offences, even in books;—it is time that we should allow the morality of atonement, and permit to Error the right to hope, as the reward of submission to its sufferings. Nor let it be thought that the close to Alice's career can offer temptation to the offence of its commencement. Eighteen years of sadness—a youth consumed in silent sorrow over the grave of Joy—have images that throw over these pages a dark and warning shadow that will haunt the young long after they turn from the tale that is about to close! If Alice had died of a broken heart—if her punishment had been more than she could bear—*then*, as in real life, you would have justly condemned my moral; and the human heart, in its pity for the victim, would have lost all recollection of the error.—My Tale is done.

END OF "ALICE; OR, THE MYSTERIES."

PAUSANIAS, THE SPARTAN.*

DEDICATION.

TO THE

REV. BENJAMIN HALL KENNEDY, D.D.

Canon of Ely, and Regius Professor of Greek in the University of Cambridge.

MY DEAR DR. KENNEDY.

Revised by your helpful hand, and corrected by your accurate scholarship, to whom may these pages be so fitly inscribed as to that one of their author's earliest and most honored friends,† whose generous assistance has enabled me to place them before the public in their present form?

It is fully fifteen, if not twenty, years since my father commenced the composition of an historical romance on the subject of Pausanias, the Spartan Regent. Circumstances, which need not here be recorded, compelled him to lay aside the work thus begun. But the subject continued to haunt his imagination and occupy his thoughts. He detected in it singular opportunities for effective exercise of the gifts most peculiàr to his genius; and repeatedly, in the intervals of other literary labor, he returned to the task which, though again and again interrupted, was abandoned. To that rare combination of the imaginative and practical faculties which characterized my father's intellect, and received from his life such varied illustration, the story of Pausanias, indeed, briefly as it is told by Thucydides and Plutarch, addressed itself with singular force. The vast conspiracy of the Spartan Regent, had it been successful, would have changed the whole course of Grecian history. To any student of political phenomena, but more especially to one who, during the greater part of his life had been personally

* [This tale first appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, August, 1859. A portion of it as then published is now suppressed, because encroaching too much on the main plot of the "Strange Story." As it stands, however, it may be considered the preliminary outline of that more elaborate attempt to construct an interest akin to that which our forefathers felt in tales of witchcraft and ghostland, out of ideas and beliefs which have crept into fashion in the society of our own day. There has, perhaps, been no age in which certain phenomena that in all ages have been produced by, or upon, certain physical temperaments, have excited so general a notice,—more perhaps among the educated classes than the uneducated. Nor do I believe that there is any age in which these phenomena have engendered throughout a wider circle a more credulous superstition. But, on the other hand, there has certainly been no age in which persons of critical and inquisitive intellect—seeking to divest what is genuine in these apparent vagaries of Nature from the cheats of venal impostors and the exaggeration of puzzled witnesses—have more soberly endeavored to render such exceptional thaumaturgia of philosophical use, in enlarging our conjectural knowledge of the complex laws of being—sometimes through physiological, sometimes through metaphysical research. Without discredit, however, to the many able and distinguished speculators on so vague a subject, it must be observed that their explanations as yet have been rather ingenious than satisfactory. Indeed, the first requisites for conclusive theory are at present wanting. The facts are not sufficiently generalized, and the evidences for them have not been sufficiently tested.

It is just when elements of the marvellous are thus struggling between superstition and philosophy, that they fall by right to the domain of Art—the art of poet or tale-teller. They furnish the constructor of imaginative fiction with materials for mysterious terror of a character not exhausted by his predecessors, and not foreign to the notions that float on the surface of his own time; while they allow him to wander freely over that range of conjecture which is favorable to his purposes, precisely because science itself has not yet disenchanted that debateable realm of its haunted shadows and goblin lights.]

† The late Lord Lytton, in his unpublished autobiographical memoirs, describing his contemporaries at Cambridge, speaks of Dr. Kennedy as "a young giant of learning."—L.

engaged in active politics, the story of such a conspiracy could not fail to be attractive. To the student of human nature the character of Pausanias himself offers sources of the deepest interest; and, in the strange career and tragic fate of the great conspirator, an imagination fascinated by the supernatural must have recognized remarkable elements of awe and terror. A few months previous to his death, I asked my father whether he had abandoned all intention of finishing his romance of "Pausanias." He replied, "On the contrary, I am finishing it now," and entered, with great animation, into a discussion of the subject and its capabilities. This reply to my inquiry surprised and impressed me for, as you are aware, my father was then engaged in the simultaneous composition of two other and very different works, "Kenelm Chillingly" and the "Parisians." It was the last time he ever spoke to me about Pausanias; but from what he then said of it I derived an impression that the book was all but completed, and needing only a few finishing touches to be ready for publication at no distant date.

This impression was confirmed, subsequent to my father's death, by a letter of instructions about his posthumous papers which accompanied his will. In that letter, dated 1856, special allusion is made to Pausanias as a work already far advanced towards its conclusion.

You, to whom, in your kind and careful revision of it, this unfinished work has suggested many questions which, alas, I cannot answer, as to the probable conduct and fate of its fictitious characters, will readily understand my reluctance to surrender an impression seemingly so well justified. I did not indeed cease to cherish it, until reiterated and exhaustive search had failed to recover from the "wallet" wherein Time "put arms for oblivion," more than those few imperfect fragments which, by your valued help, are here arranged in such order as to carry on the narrative of Pausanias, with no solution of continuity, to the middle of the second volume.

There the manuscript breaks off. Was it ever continued further? I know not. Many circumstances induce me to believe that the conception had long been carefully completed in the mind of its author; but he has left behind him only a very meagre and imperfect indication of the course which, beyond the point where it is broken, his narrative was intended to follow. In presence of this fact I have had to choose between the total suppression of the fragment, and the publication of it in its present form. My choice has not been made without hesitation; but I trust that, from many points of view, the following pages will be found to justify it.

Judiciously (as I cannot but think) for the purposes of his fiction, my father has taken up the story of Pausanias at a period subsequent to the battle of Platæa; when the Spartan Regent, as Admiral of the United Greek Fleet in the waters of Byzantium, was at the summit of his power and reputation. Mr. Grote, in his great work, expresses the opinion (which certainly cannot be disputed by unbiassed readers of Thucydides) that the victory of Platæa was not attributable to any remarkable abilities on the part of Pausanias. But Mr. Grote fairly recognizes as quite exceptional the fame and authority accorded to Pausanias, after the battle, by all the Hellenic States; the influence which his name commanded, and the awe which his character inspired. Not to the mere fact of his birth as an Heracleid, not to the lucky accident (if such it were) of his success at Platæa, and certainly not to his undisputed (but surely by no means uncommon) physical courage, is it possible to attribute the peculiar position which this remarkable man so long occupied in the estimation of his contemporaries. For the little that we know about Pausanias we are mainly dependent upon Athenian writers, who must have been strongly prejudiced against him. Mr. Grote, adopting (as any modern historian needs must do) the narrative so handed down to him, never once pauses to question its estimate of the character of a man who was at one time the glory, and at another the terror, of all Greece. Yet, in comparing the summary proceedings taken against Leotychides with the extreme, and seemingly pusillanimous, deference paid to Pausanias by the Ephors long after they possessed the most alarming proofs of his treason, Mr. Grote observes, without attempting to account for the fact, that Pausanias, though only Regent, was far more powerful than any Spartan King.

Why so powerful? Obviously, because he possessed uncommon force of character; a force of character strikingly attested by every

known incident of his career; and which, when concentrated upon the conception and execution of vast designs (even if those designs be criminal), must be recognized as the special attribute of genius. Thucydides, Plutarch, Diodorus, Grote, all these writers ascribe solely to the administrative incapacity of Pausanias that offensive arrogance which characterized his command at Byzantium, and apparently cost Sparta the loss of her maritime hegemony. But here is precisely one of those problems in public policy and personal conduct which the historian bequeaths to the imaginative writer, and which needs, for its solution, a profound knowledge rather of human nature than of books. For dealing with such a problem, my father, in addition to the intuitive penetration of character and motive which is common to every great romance writer, certainly possessed two qualifications special to himself; the habit of dealing *practically* with political questions, and experience in the active management of men. His explanation of the policy of Pausanias at Byzantium, if it be not (as I think it is) the right one, is at least the only one yet offered. I venture to think that, historically, it merits attention; as, from the imaginative point of view, it is undoubtedly felicitous. By elevating our estimate of Pausanias as a statesman, it increases our interest in him as a man.

The Author of "Pausanias" does not merely tell us that his hero, when in conference with the Spartan commissioners, displayed "great natural powers which, rightly trained, might have made him not less renowned in council than in war;" but he gives us, though briefly, the arguments used by Pausanias. He presents to us the image, always interesting, of a man who grasps firmly the clear conception of a definite but difficult policy, for success in which he is dependent on the conscious or involuntary coöperation of men impenetrable to that conception, and possessed of a collective authority even greater than his own. To retain Sparta temporarily at the head of Greece was an ambition quite consistent with the more criminal designs of Pausanias; and his whole conduct at Byzantium is rendered more intelligible that it appears in his history, when he points out that "for Sparta to maintain her ascendancy two things are needful: first, to continue the war by land, secondly, to disgust the Ionians with their sojourn at Byzantium, to send them with their ships back to their own havens, and so leave Hellas under the sole guardianship of the Spartans and their Peloponnesian allies." And who has not learned, in a later school, the wisdom of the Spartan commissioners? Do not their utterances sound familiar to us? "Increase of dominion is waste of life and treasure. Sparta is content to hold her own. What care we, who leads the Greeks into blows? The fewer blows the better. Brave men fight if they must: wise men never fight if they can help it." Of this scene and some others in the first volume of the present fragment (notably the scene in which the Regent confronts the allied chiefs, and defends himself against the charge of connivance at the escape of the Persian prisoners), I should have been tempted to say that they could not have been written without personal experience of political life; if the interview between Wallenstein and the Swedish ambassadors in Schiller's great trilogy did not recur to my recollection as I write. The language of the ambassadors in that interview is a perfect manual of practical diplomacy; and yet in practical diplomacy Schiller had no personal experience. There are, indeed, no limits to the creative power of genius. But it is, perhaps, the practical politician who will be most interested by the chapters in which Pausanias explains his policy, or defends his position.

In publishing a romance which its author has left unfinished, I may perhaps be allowed to indicate briefly what I believe to have been the general scope of its design, and the probable progress of its narrative.

The "domestic interest" of that narrative is supplied by the story of Cleonice: a story which, briefly told by Plutarch, suggests one of the most tragic situations it is possible to conceive. The pathos and terror of this dark weird episode in a life which history herself invests with all the character of romance, long haunted the imagination of Byron; and elicited from Goethe one of the most whimsical illustrations of the astonishing absurdity into which criticism sometimes tumbles, when it "o'erleaps itself and falls o' the other—."

Writing of Manfred and its author, he says, "There are, properly speaking, two females whose phantoms for ever haunt him; and

which, in this piece also, perform principal parts. One under the name of Astarte, the other without form or actual presence, and merely a voice. Of the horrid occurrence which took place with the former, the following is related:—When a bold and enterprising young man, he won the affections of a Florentine lady. Her husband discovered the amour, and murdered his wife. But the murderer was the same night found dead in the street, and there was no one to whom any suspicion could be attached. Lord Byron removed from Florence, and *these spirits haunted him all his life after.* This romantic incident is rendered highly probable by innumerable allusions to it in his poems. As, for instance, when turning his sad contemplations inwards, he applies to himself the fatal history of the King of Sparta. It is as follows: Pausanias, a Lacedæmonian General, acquires glory by the important victory at Platæa; but afterwards forfeits the confidence of his countrymen by his arrogance, obstinacy, and secret intrigues with the common enemy. This man draws upon himself the heavy guilt of innocent blood, which attends him to his end. For, while commanding the fleet of the allied Greeks in the Black Sea, he is inflamed with a violent passion for a Byzantine maiden. After long resistance, he at length obtains her from her parents; and she is to be delivered up to him at night. She modestly desires the servant to put out the lamp, and, while groping her way in the dark, she overturns it. Pausanias is awakened from his sleep; apprehensive of an attack from murderers he seizes his sword, and destroys his mistress. The horrid sight never leaves him. Her shade pursues him unceasingly; and in vain he implores aid of the gods and the exorcising priests. That poet must have a lacerated heart who selects such a scene from antiquity, appropriates it to himself, and burdens his tragic image with it."*

It is extremely characteristic of Byron, that, instead of resenting this charge of murder, he was so pleased by the criticism in which it occurs that he afterwards dedicated "The Deformed Transformed" to Goethe. Mr. Grote repeats the story above alluded to, with all the sanction of his grave authority, and even mentions the name of the young lady; apparently for the sake of adding a few black strokes to his character of Pausanias. But the super natural part of the legand was, of course, beneath the notice of a nineteenth-century critic; and he passes it by. This part of the story is, however, essential to the psychological interest of it. For whether it be that Pausanias supposed himself, or that contemporary gossips supposed him, to be haunted by the phantom of the woman he had loved and slain, the fact, in either case, affords a lurid glimpse into the inner life of the man;—just as, although Goethe's murder-story about Byron is ludicrously untrue, yet the fact that such a story was circulated, and could be seriously repeated by such a man as Goethe without being resented by Byron himself, offers significant illustration both of what Byron was, and of what he appeared to his contemporaries. Grote also assigns the death of Cleonice to that period in the life of Pausanias when he was in the command of the allies at Byzantium; and refers to it as one of the numerous outrages whereby Pausanias abused and disgraced the authority confided to him. Plutarch, however, who tells the story in greater detail, distinctly fixes the date of its catastrophe subsequent to the return of the Regent to Byzantium, as a solitary volunteer, in the trireme of Hermione. The following is his account of the affair:

"It is related that Pausanias, when at Byzantium, sought with criminal purpose, the love of a young lady of good family, named Cleonice. The parents yielding to fear, or necessity, suffered him to carry away their daughter. Before entering his chamber, she requested that the light might be extinguished; and in darkness and silence she approached the couch of Pausanias, who was already asleep. In so doing she accidentally upset the lamp. Pausanias, suddenly aroused from slumber, and supposing that some enemy was about to assassinate him, seized his sword, which lay by his bedside, and with it struck the maiden to the ground. She died of her wound; and from that moment repose was banished from the life of Pausanias. A spectre appeared to him every night in his sleep; and repeated to him in reproachful tones this hexameter verse,

'Whither I wait thee march, and receive the doom thou deservest,
Sooner or later, but ever, to man crime bringeth disaster.'

* Moore's "Life and Letters of Lord Byron," p. 723.

The allies, scandalized by this misdeed; concerted with Cimon, and besieged Pausanias in Byzantium. But he succeeded in escaping. Continually troubled by the phantom, he took refuge, it is said, at Heraclea, in that temple where the souls of the dead are evoked. He appealed to Cleonice and conjured her to mitigate his torment. She appeared to him, and told him that on his return to Sparta he would attain the end of his sufferings; indicating, as it would seem, by these enigmatic words, the death which there awaited him. This," adds Plutarch, "is a story told by most of the historians." *

I feel no doubt that this version of the story, or at least the general outline of it, would have been followed by the romance had my father lived to complete it. Some modification of its details would doubtless have been necessary for the purposes of fiction. But that the Cleonice of the novel is destined to die by the hand of her lover, is clearly indicated. To me it seems that considerable skill and judgment are shown in the pains taken, at the very opening of the book, to prepare the mind of the reader for an incident which would have been intolerably painful, and must have prematurely ended the whole narrative interest, had the character of Cleonice been drawn otherwise than as we find it in this first portion of the book. From the outset she appears before us under the shadow of a tragic fatality. Of that fatality, she is herself intuitively conscious: and with it her whole being is in harmony. No sooner do we recognize her real character than we perceive that, for such a character, there can be no fit or satisfactory issue from the difficulties of her position, in any conceivable combination of earthly circumstances. But she is not of the earth earthly. Her thoughts already habitually hover on the dim frontier of some vague spiritual region in which her love seeks refuge from the hopeless realities of her life; and, recognizing this betimes, we are prepared to see above the hand of her ill-fated lover, when it strikes her down in the dark, the merciful and releasing hand of her natural destiny.

But, assuming the author to have adopted Plutarch's chronology, and deferred the death of Cleonice till the return of Pausanias to Byzantium (the latest date to which he could possibly have deferred it), this catastrophe must still have occurred somewhere in the course, or at the close, of his second volume. There would, in that case, have still remained about nine years (and those the most eventful) of his hero's career to be narrated. The premature removal of the heroine from the narrative so early in the course of it, would therefore, at first sight, appear to be a serious defect in the conception of this romance. Here it is, however, that the credulous gossip of the old biographer comes to the rescue of the modern artist. I apprehend that the Cleonice of the novel would, after her death, have been still sensibly present to the reader's imagination throughout the rest of the romance. She would then have moved through it like a fate, reappearing in the most solemn moments of the story, and at all times apparent, even when unseen in her visible influence upon the fierce and passionate character, the sombre and turbulent career, of her guilty lover. In short, we may fairly suppose that, in all the closing scenes of the tragedy, Cleonice would have still figured and acted as one of those supernatural agencies which my father, following the example of his great predecessor, Scott, did not scruple to introduce into the composition of historical romance.*

Without the explanation here suggested, those metaphysical conversations between Cleonice, Alcman, and Pausanias, which occupy the opening chapters of Book II., might be deemed superfluous. But, in fact, they are essential to the preparation of the catastrophe; and that catastrophe, if reached, would undoubtedy have revealed to any reflective reader their important connection with the narrative which they now appear to retard somewhat unduly.

Quite apart from the unfinished manuscript of this story of Pausanias, and in another portion of my father's papers which have no reference to this story, I have discovered the following, undated, memorandum of the destined contents of the second and third volumes of the work.

PAUSANIAS.

VOL. II.

Lysander—Sparta—Ephors—Decision to recall Pausanias. 60.

* Plutarch, "Life of Cimon."

* "Harold."

Pausanias with Pharnabazes—On the point of success—Xerxes' daughter—Interview with Cleonice—Recalled. 60.

Sparta—Alcman with his family. 60.

Cleonice—Antagoras—Yields to suit of marriage. 60.

Pausanias suddenly reappears, as a volunteer—Scenes. 60.

VOL. III.

Pausanias removes Cleonice, etc.—Conspiracy against him—Up to Cleonice's death. 100.

His expulsion from Byzantium—His despair—His journey into Thrace—Scythians, etc. ?

Heraclea—Ghost. 60.

His return to Colonæ. ?

Antagoras resolved on revenge—Communicates with Sparta. ?

The * * *—Conference with Alcman—Pausanias depends on Helots, and money. 40.

His return—to death. 120.

This is the only indication I can find of the intended conclusion of the story. Meagre though it be, however, it sufficiently suggests the manner in which the author of the romance intended to deal with the circumstances of Cleonice's death as related by Plutarch. With her forcible removal by Pausanias or her willing flight with him from the house of her father, it would probably have been difficult to reconcile the general sentiment of the romance, in connection with any circumstances less conceivable than those which are indicated in the memorandum. But in such circumstances the step taken by Pausanias might have have had no worse move than the rescue of the woman who loved him from forced union with another; and Cleonice's assent to that step might have been quite compatible with the purity and heroism of her character. In this manner, moreover, a strong motive is prepared for that sentiment of revenge on the part of Antagoras whereby the dramatic interest of the story might be greatly heightened in the subsequent chapters. The intended introduction of the supernatural element is also clearly indicated. But apart from this, fine opportunies for psychological analysis would doubtless have occurred in tracing the gradual deterioration of such a character as that of Pausanias when, deprived of the guardian influence of a hope passionate but not impure, its craving for fierce excitement must have been stimulated by remorseful memories and impotent despairs. Indeed, the imperfect manuscript now printed, contains only the exposition of a tragedy. All the most striking effects, all the strongest dramatic situations, have been reserved for the pages of the manuscript which, alas, are either lost or unwritten.

Who can doubt, for instance, how effectually in the closing scenes of this tragedy the grim image of Alithea might have assumed the place assigned to it by history? All that we now see is the preparation made for its effective presentation in the foreground of such later scenes, by the chapter in the second volume describing the meeting between Lysander and the stern mother of his Spantan chief. In Lysander himself, moreover, we have the germ of a singularly dramatic situation. How would Lysander act in the final struggle which his character and fate are already preparing for him, between patriotism and friendship, his fidelity to Pausanias, and his devotion to Sparta? Is Lysander's father intended for that Ephor, who, in the last moment, made the sign that warned Pausanias to take refuge in the temple which became his living tomb? Probably. Would Themistocles, who was so seriously compromised in the conspiracy of Pausanias, have appeared and played a part in those scenes on which the curtain must remain unlifted? Possibly. Is Alcman the helot who revealed, to the Ephors, the gigantic plots of his master just when those plots were on the eve of execution? There is much in the relations between Pausanias and the Mathon, as they are described in the opening chapters of the romance, which favors, and indeed renders almost irresistible, such a supposition. But then, on the other hand, what genius on the part of the author could reconcile us to the perpetration by his hero of a crime so mean, so cowardly, as that personal perfidy to which history ascribes the revelation of the Regent's far more excusable treasons, and their terrible punishment?

These questions must remain unanswered. The magician can wave his wand no more The circle is broken, the spells are scattered, the secret lost. The images which he evoked and which he alone could animate, remain be-

fore us incomplete, semi-articulate, unable to satisfy the curiosity they inspire. A group of fragments, in many places broken, you have helped me to restore. With what reverent and kindly care, with what disciplined judgment and felicitous suggestion, you have accomplished the difficult task so generously undertaken, let me here most gratefully attest. Beneath the sculptor's name, allow me to inscribe upon the pedestal your own; and accept this sincere assurance of the inherited esteem and personal regard with which I am,

My dear Dr. Kennedy,

Your obliged and faithful

LYTTON.

CINTRA, 5 *July*, 1875.

BOOK FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

On one of the quays which bordered the unrivalled harbor of Byzantium, more than twenty-three centuries before the date at which this narrative is begun, stood two Athenians. In the waters of the haven rode the vessels of the Grecian Fleet. So deep was the basin, in which the tides are scarcely felt,* that the prows of some of the ships touched the quays, and the setting sun glittered upon the smooth and waxen surfaces of the prows rich with diversified colors and wrought gliding. To the extreme right of the fleet, and and nearly opposite the place upon which the Athenians stood, was a vessel still more profusely ornamented than the rest. On the prow were elaborately carved the heads of the twin deities of the Laconian mariner, Castor and Pollux; in the centre of the deck was a wooden edifice or pavilion having a gilded roof and shaded by purple awnings, an imitation of the luxurious galleys of the Barbarian; while the parasemon, or flag, as it idly waved in the faint breeze of the gentle evening, exhibited the terrible serpent, which, if it was the fabulous type of demigods and heroes, might also be regarded as an emblem of the wily but stern policy of the Spartan State. Such was the galley of the commander of the armament, which (after the reduction of Cyprus) had but lately wrested from the yoke of Persia that link between her European and Asiatic domains, that key of the Bosphorous—"the Golden Horn" of Byzantium.†

High above all other Greeks (Themistocles alone excepted) soared the fame of that renowned chief, Pausanias, Regent of Sparta and General of the allied troops at the victorious battle-field of Platæa. The spot on which the Athenians stool was lonely and now unoccupied, save by themselves and the sentries stationed at some distance on either hand. The larger proportion of the crews in the various vessels were on shore; but on the decks idly reclined small groups of sailors, and the murmur of their voices stole, indistinguishably blended, upon the translucent air. Behind rose, one above the other, the Seven Hills, on which long afterwards the Emperor Constantine built a second Rome; and over these heights, even then, buildings were scattered of various forms and dates, here the pillared temples of the Greek colonists, to whom Byzantium owed its origin, there the light roofs and painted domes which the Eastern conquerors had introduced.

One of the Athenians was a man in the meridian of manhood, of a calm, sedate, but somewhat haughty aspect; the other was in the full bloom of youth, of lofty stature, and with a certain majesty of bearing; down his shoulders flowed a profusion of long curled hair,* divided in the centre of the forehead, and connected with golden clasps, in which was wrought the emblem of the Athenian nobles—the Grasshopper—a fashion not yet obsolete, as it had become in the days of Thucydides. Still, to an observer, there was something heavy in the ordinary expression of the handsome countenance. His dress differed from the earlier fashion of the Ionians; it dispensed with those loose linen garments which had something of effeminacy in their

* Gibbon, ch. 17.

† "The harbor of Constantinople, which may be considered as an arm of the Bosphorus, obtained in a very remote period the denomination of the Golden Horn. The curve which it describes might be compared to the horn of a stag, or, as it should seem, with more propriety to that of an ox."—Gib. c. 17; Strab. l. x

* Ion *apud* Plut.

folds, and was confined to the simple and statue-like grace that characterized the Dorian garb. Yet the clasp that fastened the chlamys upon the right shoulder, leaving the arm free, was of pure gold and exquisite workmanship, and the materials of the simple vesture were of a quality that betokened wealth and rank in the wearer.

"Yes, Cimon said the elder of the Athenians, "yonder galley itself affords sufficient testimony of the change that has come over the haughty Spartan. It is difficult, indeed, to recognize in this luxurious satrap, who affects the dress, the manners, the very insolence of the Barbarian, that Pausanias, who, after the glorious day of Platæa, ordered the slaves to prepare in the tent of Mardonius such a banquet as would have been served to the Persian, while his own Spartan broth and bread were set beside it, in order that he might utter to the chiefs of Greece that noble pleasantry, 'Behold the folly of the Persians, who forsook such splendor to plunder such poverty.'" *

"Shame upon his degeneracy, and thrice shame!" said the young Cimon, sternly. "I love the Spartans so well, that I blush for whatever degrades them. And all Sparta is dwarfted by the effeminacy of her chief."

"Softly, Cimon," said Aristides, with a sober smile. "Whatever surprise we may feel at the corruption of Pausanias he is not one who will allow us to feel contempt. Through all the voluptuous softness acquired by intercourse with these Barbarians, the strong nature of the descendant of the demigod still breaks forth. Even at the distaff I recognize Alcides, whether for evil or for good. Pausanias is one on whom our most anxious gaze must be duly bent. But in this change of his I rejoice; the gods are at work for Athens. See you not that, day after day, while Pausanias disgusts the allies with the Spartans themselves, he throws them more and more into the arms of Athens? Let his madness go on, and ere long the violet-crowned city will become the queen of the seas."

"Such was my own hope," said Cimon, his face assuming a new expression, brightened with all the intelligence of ambition and pride; "but I did not dare own it to myself till you spoke. Several officers of Ionia and the Isles have already openly and loudly proclaimed to me their wish to exchange the Spartan ascendancy for the Athenian."

"And with all your love for Sparta," said Aristides, looking steadfastly, and searchingly at his comrade, "you would not then hesitate to rob her of a glory which you might bestow on your own Athens?"

"Ah, am I not Athenian?" answered Cimon, with a deep passion in his voice. "Though my great father perished a victim to the injustice of a faction—though he who had saved Athens from the Mede died in the Athenian dungeon—still, fatherless, I see in Athens but a mother, and if her voice sounded harshly in my boyish years, in manhood I have feasted on her smiles. Yes, I honor Sparta, but I love Athens. You have my answer."

"You speak well," said Aristides, with warmth; "you are worthy of the destinies for which I foresee that the son of Miltiades is reserved. Be wary, be cautious; above all, be smooth, and blend with men of every state and grade. I would wish that the allies themselves should draw the contrast between the insolence of the Spartan chief and the courtesy of the Athenians. What said you to the Ionian officers?"

"I said that Athens held there was no difference between to command and to obey, except so far as was best for the interest of Greece; that—as on the field of Platæa, when the Tegeans asserted precedence over the Athenians, we, the Athenian army, at once exclaimed, through your voice, Aristides, 'We come here to fight the Barbarian, not to dispute amongst ourselves! place us where you will;'*—even so now, while the allies give the command to Sparta, Sparta we will obey. But if we were thought by the Greecian States the fittest leaders, our answer would be the same that we give to Platæa, 'Not we, but Greece be consulted; place us where you will!'"

"O wise Cimon!" exclaimed Aristides, "I have no caution to bestow on you. You do by intuition that which I attempt by experience. But hark! What music sounds in the distance? the airs that Lydia borrowed from the East?"

"And for which," said Cimon, sarcastically, "Pausanias hath abandoned the Dorian flute."

Soft, airy, and voluptuous were indeed the sounds which now, from the streets leading

* Herod, ix. 82.

* Plut. in Vit Artist.

upwards from the quay, floated along the delicious air. The sailors rose, listening and eager, from the decks; there was once more bustle, life, and animation on board the fleet. From several of the vessels the trumpets woke a sonorous signal-note. In a few minutes the quays, before so deserted, swarmed with the Greecian mariners, who emerged hastily, whether from various houses in the haven, or from the encampment which stretched along it, and hurried to their respective ships. On board the galley of Pausanias there was more especial animation; not only mariners, but slaves, evidently from the Eastern markets, were seen, jostling each other, and heard talking, quick and loud, in foreign tongues. Rich carpets were unfurled and laid across the deck, while trembling and hasty hands smoothed into yet more graceful folds the curtains that shaded the gay pavilion in the centre. The Athenians looked on, the one with thoughtful composure, the other with a bitter smile, while these preparations announced the unexpected, and not undreaded approach of the great Pausanias.

"Ho, noble Cimon!" cried a young man who, hurrying towards one of the vessels, caught sight of the Athenians and paused. "You are the very person whom I most desired to see. Aristides too!—we are fortunate."

The speaker was a young man of slighter make and lower stature than the Athenians, but well shaped, and with features the partial effeminancy of which was elevated by an expression of great vivacity and intelligence. The steed trained for Elis never bore in its proportions the evidence of blood and rare breeding more visibly than the dark brilliant eye of this young man, his broad low transparent brow, expanded nostril and sensitive lip, revealed the passionate and somewhat arrogant character of the vivacious Greek of the Ægean Isles.

"Antagoras," replied Cimon, laying his hand with frank and somewhat blunt cordiality on the Greek's shoulder, "like the grape of your own Chios, you cannot fail to be welcome at all times. But why would you seek us now?"

"Because I will no longer endure the insolence of this rude Spartan. Will you believe it. Cimon—will you believe it, Aristides? Pausanias has actually dared to sentence to blows, to stripes, one of my own men—a free Chian—nay, a Decadarchus.* I have but this instant heard it. And the offence—Gods! the *offence!*—was that he ventured to contest with a Laconian, an underling in the Spartan army, which one of the two had the fair right to a wine cask! Shall this be borne, Cimon?"

"Stripes to a Greek?" said Cimon, and the color mounted to his brow. "Thinks Pausanias that the Ionian race are already his Helots?"

"Be calm," said Aristides; "Pausanias approaches. I will accost him."

"But listen still!" exclaimed Antagoras, eagerly, plucking the gown of the Athenian as the latter turned away. "When Pausanias heard of the contest between my soldier and his Laconian, what said he, think you! 'Prior claim; learn henceforth that, where the Spartans are to be found, the Spartans in all matters have the prior claim."

"We will see to it," returned Aristides, calmly; "but keep by my side."

And now the music sounded loud and near, and suddenly, as the procession approached, the character of that music altered. The Lydian measures ceased, those who had attuned them gave way to musicians of loftier aspect and simpler garb; in whom might be recognized, not indeed the genuine Spartans, but their free, if subordinate, countrymen of Laconia; and a minstrel, who walked beside them, broke out into a song, partially adapted from the bold and lively strain of Alcæus, the first two lines in each stanza ringing much to that chime, the two latter reduced into briefer compass, as, with allowance for the differing laws of national rhythm, we thus seek to render the verse:

SONG.

Multitudes, backward! Way for the Dorian:
Way for the Lord of rocky Laconia;
Heaven to Hercules opened
Way on earth for his son.

Steel and fate, blunted, break on his fortitude.
Two evils only never endureth he—
Death by a wound in retreating,
Life with a blot on his name.

Rocky his birthplace: rocks are immutable;
So are his laws, and so shall his glory be.
Time is the Victor of Nations,
Sparta the Victor of Time.

* Leader of ten men.

Watch o'er him heedful on the wide ocean,
Brothers of Helen, luminous guiding stars;
Dangerous to Truth are the fickle,
Dangerous to Sparta the seas.

Multitudes, backward! Way for the Conqueror;
Way for the footstep half the world fled before;
Nothing that Phœbus can shine on
Needs so much space as Renown.

Behind the musicians came ten Spartans, selected from the celebrated three hundred who claimed the right to be stationed around the king in battle. Tall, stalwart, sheathed in armor, their shields slung at their backs, their crests of plumage or horsehair waving over their strong and stern features, those hardy warriors betrayed to the keen eye of Aristides their sullen discontent at the part assigned to them in the luxurious procession; their brows were knit, their lips contracted, and each of them who caught the glance of the Athenians, turned his eyes, as half in shame, half in anger, to the ground.

Coming now upon the quay, opposite to the galley of Pausanias, from which was suspended a ladder of silken cords, the procession halted, and opening on either side, left space in the midst for the commander.

"He comes," whispered Antagoras to Cimon. "By Hercules! I pray you survey him well. It is the conqueror of Mardonius, or the ghost of Mardonius himself?"

The question of the Chian seemed not extravagant to the blunt son of Militiades, as his eyes now rested on Pausanias.

The pure Spartan race boasted, perhaps, the most superb models of masculine beauty which the land blessed by Apollo could afford. The laws that regulate marriage seemed a healthful and vigorous progeny. Gymnastic discipline from early boyhood gave ease to the limbs, iron to the muscle, grace to the whole frame. Every Spartan, being born to command, being noble by his birth, lord of the Laconians, Master of the Helots, superior in the eyes of Greece to all other Greeks, was at once a Republican and an Aristocrat. Schooled in the arts that compose the presence, and give calmness and majesty to the bearing, he combined with the mere physical advantages of activity and strength a conscious and yet natural dignity of mien. Amidst the Greeks assembled at the Olympian contests, others showed richer garments, more sumptuous chariots, rarer steeds but no state could vie with Sparta in the thews and sinews, the aspect and the majesty of the men. Nor were the royal race, the descendants of Hercules, in external appearance unworthy of their countrymen and of their fabled origin.

Sculptor and painter would have vainly tasked their imaginative minds to invent a nobler ideal for the effigies of a hero, than that which the Victor of Platæa offered to their inspiration. As he now paused amidst the group, he towered high above them all, even above Cimon himself. But in his stature there was nothing of the cumbrous bulk and stolid heaviness, which often destroy the beauty of vast strength. Severe and early training, long habits of rigid abstemiousness, the toils of war, and, more than all, perhaps, the constant play of a restless, anxious, aspiring temper, had left undisfigured by superfluous flesh, the grand proportions of a frame, the very spareness of which had at once the strength and the beauty of one of those hardy victors in the wrestling or boxing match, whose agility and force are modelled by discipline to the purest forms of grace. Without that exact and chiselled harmony of countenance which characterized, perhaps, the Ionic rather than the Doric race, the features of the royal Spartan were noble and commanding. His complexion was sunburnt, almost to oriental swarthiness, and the raven's plume had no darker gloss than that of his long hair, which (contrary to the Spartan custom), flowing on either side, mingled with the closer curls of the beard. To a scrutinizing gaze, the more dignified and prepossessing effect of this exterior would perhaps have been counter-balanced by an eye, bright indeed and penetrating, but restless and suspicious, by a certain ineffable mixture of arrogant pride and profound melancholy in the general expression of the countenance, ill according with that frank and serene aspect which best becomes the face of one who would lead mankind. About him altogether—the countenance, the form, the bearing—there was that which woke a vague, profound, and singular interest, an interest somewhat mingled with awe, but not altogether uncalculated to produce that affection which belongs to admiration, save when the sudden frown or disdainful lip repelled the gentler impulse and tended rather to excite fear, or to irritate pride, or to wound self-love.

But if the form and features of Pausanias were eminently those of the purest race of Greece, the dress which he assumed was no less characteristic of the Barbarian. He wore, not the garb of the noble Persian race, which, close and simple, was but a little less manly than that of the Greeks, but the flowing and gorgeous garments of the Mede. His long gown, which swept the earth, was covered with flowers wrought in golden tissue. Instead of the Spartan hat, the high Median cap or tiara crowned his perfumed and lustrous hair, while (what of all was most hateful to Grecian eyes) he wore, though otherwise unarmed, the curved scimitar and short dirk that were the national weapons of the Barbarian. And as it was not customary, nor indeed legitimate, for the Greeks to wear weapons on peaceful occasions and with their ordinary costume, so this departure from the common practice had not only in itself something offensive to the jealous eyes of his comrades, but was rendered yet more obnoxious by the adoption of the very arms of the east.

By the side of Pausanias was a man whose dark beard was already sown with grey. This man, named Gongylus, though a Greek—a native of Eretria, in Eubœa—was in high command under the great Persian king. At the time of the barbarian invasion under Datis and Artaphernes, he had deserted the cause of Greece and had been rewarded with the lordship of four towns in Æolis. Few among the apostate Greeks were more deeply instructed in the language and manners of the Persians; and the intimate and sudden friendship that had grown up between him and the Spartan was regarded by the Greeks with the most bitter and angry suspicion. As if to show his contempt for the natural jealousy of his countrymen, Pausanias, however, had just given to the Eretrian the government of Byzantium itself, and with the command of the citadel had entrusted to him the custody of the Persian prisoners captured in that port. Among these were men of the highest rank and influence at the court of Xerxes; and it was more than rumored that of late Pausanias had visited and conferred with them, through the interpretation of Gongylus, far more frequently than became the General of the Greeks. Gongylus had one of those countenances which are observed when many of more striking semblance are overlooked. But the features were sharp and the visage lean, the eyes vivid and sparkling as those of the lynx, and the dark pupil seemed yet more dark from the extreme whiteness of the ball, from which it lessened or dilated with the impulse of the spirit which gave it fire. There was in that eye all the subtle craft, the plotting and restless malignity, which usually characterized those Greek renegades who prostituted their native energies to the rich service of the Barbarian; and the lips, narrow and thin, wore that everlasting smile which to the credulous disguises wile, and to the experienced betrays it. Small, spare, and prematurely bent, the Eretrian supported himself by a staff, upon which now leaning, he glanced, quickly and pryingly, around, till his eyes rested upon the Athenians, with the young Chian standing in their rear.

"The Athenian Captains are here to do you homage, Pausanias," said he, in a whisper, as he touched with his small lean fingers the arm of the Spartan.

Pausanias turned and muttered to himself, and at that instant Aristides approached.

"If it please you, Pausanias, Cimon and myself, the leaders of the Athenians, would crave a hearing upon certain matters."

"Son of Lysimachus, say on."

"Your pardon, Pausanias," returned the Athenian, lowering his voice, and with a smile —"This is too crowded a council-hall; may we attend you on board your galley?"

"Not so," answered the Spartan haughtily; "the morning to affairs, the evening to recreation. We shall sail in the bay to see the moon rise, and if we indulge in consultations, it will be over our winecups. It is a good custom."

"It is a Persian one," said Cimon bluntly.

"It is permitted to us," returned the Spartan coldly, "to borrow from those we conquer. But enough of this. I have no secrets with the Athenians. No matter if the whole city hear what you would address to Pausanias."

"It is to complain," said Aristides with calm emphasis, but still in an undertone.

"Ay, I doubt it not: the Athenians are eloquent in grumbling."

"It was not found so at Platæa," returned Cimon.

"Son of Miltiades," said Pausanias loftily,

"your wit outruns your experience. But my time is short. To the matter!"

"If you will have it so, I will speak," said Aristides, raising his voice. "Before your own Spartans, our comrades in arms, I proclaim our causes of complaint. Firstly, then, I demand release and compensation to seven Athenians, free-born and citizens, whom your orders have condemned to the unworthy punishment of standing all day in the open sun with the weight of iron anchors on their shoulders."

"The mutinous knaves!" exclaimed the Spartan. "They introduced into the camp the insolence of their own agora, and were publicly heard in the streets inveighing against myself as a favorer of the Persians."

"It was easy to confute the charge; it was tyrannical to punish words in men whose deeds had raised you to the command of Greece."

"*Their* deeds! Ye Gods, give me patience! By the help of Juno the protectress it was this brain and this arm that—— But I will not justify myself by imitating the Athenian fashion of wordly boasting. Pass on to your next complaint."

"You have placed slaves—yes, Helots—around the springs, to drive away with scourges the soldiers that come for water."

"Not so, but merely to prevent others from filling their vases until the Spartans are supplied."

"And by what right——?" began Cimon, but Aristides checked him with a gesture, and proceeded.

"That precedence is not warranted by custom, nor by the terms of our alliance; and the springs, O Pausanias, are bounteous enough to provide for all. I proceed. You have formally sentenced citizens and soldiers to the scourge. Nay, this very day you have extended the sentence to one in actual command amongst the Chians. Is it not so, Antagoras?"

"It is," said the young Chian, coming forward boldly; "and in the name of my countrymen I demand justice."

"And I also, Uliades of Samos," said a thickest and burly Greek who had joined the group unobserved, "*I* demand justice. What, by the Gods! Are we to be all equals in the day of battle? 'My good sir, march here;' and, 'My dear sir, just run into that breach;' and yet when we have won the victory and should share the glory, is one state, nay, one man to seize the whole, and deal out iron anchors and tough cowhides to his companions? No, Spartans, this is not your view of the case; you suffer in the eyes of Greece by this misconduct. To Sparta itself I appeal."

"And what, most patient sir," said Pausanias, with calm sarcasm, though his eye shot fire, and the upper lip, on which no Spartan suffered the beard to grow, slightly quivered—"what is *your* contribution to the catalogue of complaints?"

"Jest not, Pausanias; you will find me in earnest," answered Uliades, doggedly, and encouraged by the evident effect that his eloquence had produced upon the Spartans themselves. "I have met with a grievous wrong, and all Greece shall hear of it, if it be not redressed. My own brother, who at Mycale slew four Persians with his own hand, headed a detachment for forage. He and his men were met by a company of mixed Laconians and Helots, their forage taken from them, they themselves assaulted, and my brother, a man who has moneys and maintains forty slaves of his own, struck thrice across the face by a rascally Helot. Now, Pausanias, your answer!"

"You have prepared a notable scene for the commander of your forces, son of Lysimachus," said the Spartan addressing himself to Aristides. "Far be it from me to affect the Agamemnon, but your friends are less modest in imitating the venerable model of Thersites. Enough" (and changing the tone of his voice, the chief stamped his foot vehemently to the ground): "we owe no account to our inferiors; we render no explanation save to Sparta and and her Ephors."

"So be it, then," said Aristides, gravely; "we have our answer, and you will hear of our appeal."

Pausanias changed color. "How?" said he, with a slight hesitation in his tone. "Mean you to threaten me—Me—with carrying the busy tales of your disaffection to the Spartan government?"

"Time will show. Farewell, Pausanias. We will detain you no longer from your pastime."

"But," began Uliades.

"Hush," said the Athenian, laying his hand

on the Samian's shoulder. "We will confer anon."

Pausanias paused a moment, irresolute and in thought. His eyes glanced towards his own countrymen, who, true to their rigid discipline, neither spake nor moved, but whose countenances were sullen and overcast, and at that moment his pride was shaken, and his heart misgave him. Gongylus watched his countenance, and once more laying his hand on his arm, said in a whisper—

"He who seeks to rule never goes back."

"Tush, you know not the Spartans."

"But I know Human Nature; it is the same everywhere. You cannot yield to this insolence; to-morrow, of your own accord, send for these men separately and pacify them."

"You are right. Now to the vessel!"

With this, leaning on the shoulder of the Persian, and with a slight wave of his hand towards the Athenians—he did not deign even that gesture to the island officers—Pausanias advanced to the vessel, and slowly ascending, disappeared within his pavilion. The Spartans and the musicians followed; then, spare and swarthy, some half score of Egyptian sailors; last came a small party of Laconians and Helots, who, standing at some distance behind Pausanias, had not hitherto been observed. The former were but slightly armed; the latter had forsaken their customary rude and savage garb, and wore long gowns and gay tunics, somewhat in the fashion of the Lydians. With these last there was one of a mien and aspect that strongly differed from the lowering and ferocious cast of countenance common to the Helot race. He was of the ordinary stature, and his frame was not characterized by any appearance of unusual strength; but he trod the earth with a firm step and an erect crest, as if the curse of the slave had not yet destroyed the inborn dignity of the human being. There was a certain delicacy and refinement, rather of thought than beauty, in his clear, sharp, and singularly intelligent features. In contradistinction from the free-born Spartans, his hair was short, and curled close above a broad and manly forehead; and his large eyes of dark blue looked full and bold upon the Athenians with something if not of defiance, at least of pride in their gaze, as he stalked by them to the vessel.

"A sturdy fellow for a Helot," muttered Cimon.

"And merits well his freedom," said the son of Lysimachus. "I remember him well. He is Alcman, the foster-brother of Pausanias, whom he attended at Platæa. Not a Spartan that day bore himself more bravely."

"No doubt they will put him to death when he goes back to Sparta," said Antagoras. "When a Helot is brave, the Ephors clap the black mark against his name, and at the next crypteia he suddenly disappears."

"Pausanias may share the same fate as his Helot, for all I care," quoth Uliades. "Well, Athenians, what say you to the answer we have received?"

"That Sparta shall hear of it," answered Aristides.

"Ah, but is that all? Recollect the Ionians have the majority in the fleet; let us not wait for the slow Ephors. Let us at once throw off this insufferable yoke, and proclaim Athens the Mistress of the Seas. What say you, Cimon?"

"Let Aristides answer."

"Yonder lie the Athenian vessels," said Aristides "Those who put themselves voluntarily under our protection we will not reject. But remember we assert no claim; we yield but to the general wish."

"Enough; I understand you," said Antagoras.

"Not quite," returned the Athenian with a smile. "The breach between you and Pausanias is begun, but it is not yet wide enough. You yourselves must do that which will annul all power in the Spartan, and then if ye come to Athens ye will find her as bold against the Doric despot as against the Barbarian foe."

"But speak more plainly. What would you have us do?" asked Uliades, rubbing his chin in great perplexity.

"Nay, nay, I have already said enough. Fare ye well, fellow-countrymen," and leaning lightly on the shoulder of Cimon, the Athenian passed on.

Meanwhile the splendid galley of Pausanias slowly put forth into the farther waters of the bay. The oars of the rowers broke the surface into countless phosphoric sparkles, and the sound they made, as they dashed amidst the gentle waters, seemed to keep time with the song and the instruments on the deck

The Ionians gazed in silence as the stately vessel, now shooting far ahead of the rest, swept into the centre of the bay. And the moon, just rising, shone full upon the glittering prow, and streaked the rippling billows over which it had bounded, with a light, as it were, of glory.

Antagoras sighed.

"What think you of?" asked the rough Samian.

"Peace," replied Antagoras. "In this hour, when the fair face of Artemis recalls the old legends of Endymion, is it not permitted to man to remember that before the iron age came the golden, before war reigned love?"

"Tush," said Uliades. "Time enough to think of love when we have satisfied vengeance. Let us summon our friends, and hold council on the Spartan's insults."

"Whither goes now the Spartan?" murmured Antagoras abstractedly, as he suffered his companion to lead him away. Then halting abruptly, he struck his clenched hand on his breast.

"O Aphrodite!" he cried; "this night—this night I will seek thy temple. Hear my vows—soothe my jealousy!"

"Ah," grunted Uliades, "if, as men say, thou lovest a fair Byzantine, Aphrodite will have sharp work to cure thee of jealousy, unless she first makes thee blind."

Antagoras smiled faintly, and the two Ionians moved on slowly and in silence. In a few minutes more the quays were deserted and nothing but that blended murmur, spreading wide and indistinct throughout the camp, and a noisier but occasional burst of merriment from those resorts of obscener pleasure which were profusely scattered along the haven, mingled with the whispers of "the far resounding sea."

CHAPTER II.

On a couch beneath his voluptuous awning, reclined Pausanias. The curtains, drawn aside, gave to view the moonlit ocean, and the dim shadows of the shore, with the dark woods beyond, relieved by the distant lights of the city. On one side of the Spartan was a small table, that supported goblets and vases of that exquisite wine which Maronea proffered to the thirst of the Byzantine, and those cooling and delicious fruits which the orchards around the city supplied as amply as the fabled gardens of the Hesperides, were heaped on the other side. Towards the foot of the couch, propped upon cushions piled on the floor, sat Gongylus, conversing in a low, earnest voice, and fixing his eyes steadfastly on the Spartan. The habits of the Eretrian's life, which had brought him in constant contact with the Persians, had infected his very language with the luxuriant extravagance of the East. And the thoughts he uttered made his language but too musical to the ears of the iistening Spartan.

"And fair as these climes may seem to you, and rich as are the gardens and granaries of Byzantium, yet to me who have stood on the terraces of Babylon and looked upon groves covering with blossom and fruit the very fortresses and walls of that queen of nations,—to me, who have roved amidst the vast delights of Susa, through palaces whose very porticoes might enclose the limits of a Grecian city—who have stood, awed and dazzled, in the courts of that wonder of the world, that crown of the East, the marble magnificence of Persepolis—to me, Pausanias, who have been thus admitted into the very heart of Persian glories, this city of Byzantium appears but a village of artisans and fishermen. The very foliage of its forests, pale and sickly, the very moonlight upon the waters, cold and smileless, ah, if thou couldst but see! But pardon me, I weary thee?"

"Not so," said the Spartan, who, raised upon his elbow, listened to the words of Gongylus with deep attention. "Proceed."

"Ah, if thou couldst but see the fair regions which the great king has apportioned to thy countryman Demaratus. And if a domain, that would satiate the ambition of the most craving of your earlier tyrants, fall to Demaratus, what would be the splendid satraphy in which the conqueror of Platæa might plant his throne?"

"In truth, my renown and my power are greater than those ever possessed by Demaratus," said the Spartan, musingly.

"Yet," pursued Gongylus, "it is not so much the mere extent of the territories which the grateful Xerxes could proffer to the brave

Pausanias—it is not their extent so much that might tempt desire, neither is it their stately forests, nor the fertile meadows, nor the ocean-like rivers, which the gods of the East have given to the race of Cyrus. There, free from the strange constraints which our austere customs and solemn deities impose upon the Greeks, the beneficent Ormuzd scatters ever-varying delights upon the paths of men. All that art can invent, all that the marts of the universe can afford of the rare and voluptuous, are lavished upon abodes the splendor of which, even our idle dreams of Olympus never shadowed forth. There, instead of the harsh and imperious helpmate to whom the joyless Spartan confines his reluctant love, all the beauties of every clime contend for the smile of their lord. And wherever are turned the change-loving eyes of Passion, the Aphrodite of our poets, such as the Cytherian and the Cyprian fable her, seems to recline on the lotus leaf or to rise from the unruffled ocean of delight. Instead of the gloomy brows and the harsh tones of rivals envious of your fame, hosts of friends aspiring only to be followers will catch gladness from your smile or sorrow from your frown. There, no jarring contests with little men, who deem themselves the equals of the great, no jealous Ephor is found, to load the commonest acts of life with fetters of iron custom. Talk of liberty! Liberty in Sparta is but one eternal servitude; you cannot move, or eat, or sleep, save as the law directs. Your very children are wrested from you just in the age when their voices sound most sweet. Ye are not men; ye are machines. Call you this liberty, Pausanias? I, a Greek, have known both Grecian liberty and Persian royalty. Better be chieftain to a king than servant to a mob! But in Eretria at least, pleasure was not denied. In Sparta the very Graces preside over discipline and war only."

"Your fire falls upon flax," said Pausanias, rising, and with passionate emotion. "And if you, the Greek of a happier state, you who know but by report the unnatural bondage to which the Spartans are subjected, can weary of the very name of Greek, what must be the feelings of one who from the cradle upward has been starved out of the genial desires of life? Even in earliest youth, while yet all other lands and customs were unknown, when it was duly poured into my ears that to be born a Spartan constituted the glory and the bliss of earth, my soul sickened at the lesson, and my reason revolted against the lie. Often when my whole body was lacerated with stripes, disdaining to groan, I yet yearned to strike, and I cursed my savage tutors who denied pleasure even to childhood with all the madness of impotent revenge. My mother herself (sweet name elsewhere) had no kindness in her face. She was the pride of the matronage of Sparta, because of all our women Alithea was the most unsexed. When I went forth to my first crypteia, to watch, amidst the wintry dreariness of the mountains, upon the movements of the wretched Helots, to spy upon their sufferings, to take account of their groans, and if one more manly than the rest dared to mingle curses with his groans, to mark *him* for slaughter as a wolf that threatened danger to the fold; to lurk, an assassin, about his home, to dog his walks, to fall upon him unawares, to strike him from behind, to filch away his life, to bury him in the ravines, so that murder might leave no trace; when upon this initiating campaign, the virgin trials of our youth, I first set forth, my mother drew near, and girding me herself with my grandsire's sword, 'Go forth,' she said, 'as the young hound to the chase, to wind, to double, to leap on the prey, and to taste of blood. See, the sword is bright; show me the stains at thy return.'"

"Is it then true, as the Greeks generally declare," interrupted Gongylus, "that in these campaigns, or crypteias, the sole aim and object is the massacre of Helots?"

"Not so," replied Pausanias; "savage though the custom, it smells not so foully of the shambles. The avowed object is to harden the nerves of our youth. Barefooted, unattended, through cold and storm, performing ourselves the most menial offices necessary to life, we wander for a certain season daily and nightly through the rugged territories of Laconia.* We go as boys—we come back as men.† The avowed object, I say, is inurement to hardship, but with this is connected the secret end of keeping watch on these half-tamed and bull-like herds of men whom we call

* Plat. Leg. i. p. 633. See also Müller's Dorians, vol. ii. p. 41.

† Pueros puberes—neque prius in urbem redire quam viri facti essent.—Justin. iii. 3.

the Helots. If any be dangerous, we mark him for the knife. One of them had thrice been a ringleader in revolt. He was wary as well as fierce. He had escaped in three succeeding crypteias. To me, as one of the Heraclidæ, was assigned the honor of tracking and destroying him. For three days and three nights I dogged his footsteps (for he had caught the scent of the pursuers and fled), through forest and defile, through valley and crag, stealthily and relentlessly. I followed him close. At last, one evening, having lost sight of all my comrades, I came suddenly upon him as I emerged from a wood. It was a broad patch of waste land, through which rushed a stream swollen by the rains, and plunging with a sullen roar down a deep and gloomy precipice, that to the right and left bounded the waste, the stream in front, the wood in the rear. He was reclining by the stream, at which, with the hollow of his hand, he quenched his thirst. I paused to gaze upon him, and as I did so he turned and saw me. He rose, and fixed his eyes on mine, and we examined each other in silence. The Helots are rarely of tall stature, but this was a giant. His dress, that of his tribe, of rude sheepskins, and his cap made from the hide of a dog increased the savage rudeness of his appearance. I rejoiced that he saw me, and that, as we were alone, I might fight him fairly. It would have been terrible to slay the wretch if I had caught him in his sleep."

"Proceed," said Gongylus, with interest, for so little was known of Sparta by the rest of the Greeks, especially outside the Peloponnesus, that these details gratified his natural spirit of gossiping inquisitiveness.

"'Stand!' said I, and he moved not. I approached him slowly. 'Thou art a Spartan,' said he, in a deep and harsh voice, 'and thou comest for my blood. Go, boy, go, thou art not mellowed to thy prime, and thy comrades are far away. The shears of the Fatal deities hover over the thread not of my life but of thine.' I was struck, Gongylus, by this address, for it was neither desperate not dastardly, as I had anticipated; nevertheless, it beseemed not a Spartan to fly from a Helot, and I drew the sword which my mother had girded on. The Helot watched my movements, and seized a rude and knotted club that lay on the ground beside him.

"'Wretch,' said I, 'darest thou attack face to face a descendant of the Heraclidæ? In me behold Pausanias, the son of Cleombrotus.'

"'Be it so; in the city one is the god-born, the other the man-enslaved. On the mountains we are equals.'

"'Knowest thou not,' said I, 'that if the Gods condemned me to die by thy hand, not only thou, but thy whole house, thy wife and children, would be sacrificed to my ghost?'

"'The earth can hide the Spartan's bones as secretly as the Helot's,' answered my strange foe. 'Begone, young and unfleshed in slaughter as you are; why make war upon me? My death can give you neither gold nor glory. I have never harmed thee or thine. How much of the air and sun does this form take from the descendant of the Heraclidæ?'

"'Thrice hast thou raised revolt among the Helots, thrice at thy voice have they risen in bloody, though fruitless, strife against their masters.'

"'Not at my voice, but at that of the two deities who are the war-gods of slaves—Persecution and Despair.'*

"Impatient of this parley, I tarried no longer. I sprang upon the Helot. He evaded my sword, and I soon found that all my agility and skill were requisite to save me from the massive weapon, one blow of which would have sufficed to crush me. But the Helot seemed to stand on the defensive, and continued to back towards the wood from which I had emerged. Fearful lest he would escape me, I pressed hard on his foot-steps. My blood grew warm; my fury got the better of my prudence. My foot stumbled; I recovered in an instant, and looking up, beheld the terrible club suspended over my head; it might have fallen, but the stroke of death was withheld. I misinterpreted the merciful delay; the lifted arm left the body of my enemy exposed. I struck him on the side; the thick hide blunted the stroke, but drew blood. Afraid to draw back within the reach of his weapon, I threw myself on him, and grappled to his throat. We rolled on the earth together; it was but a moment's

* When Themistocles sought to extort tribute from the Andrians, he said, "I bring with me two powerful gods—Persuasion and Force." "And on our side," was the answer, "are two deities not less powerful—Poverty and Despair!"

struggle. Strong as I was even in boyhood, the Helot would have been a match for Alcides. A shade passed over my eyes; my breath heaved short. The slave was kneeling on my breast, and, dropping the club, he drew a short knife from his girdle. I gazed upon him grim and mute. I was conquered, and I cared not for the rest.

"The blood from his side, as he bent over me, trickled down upon my face.

"'And this blood,' said the Helot, 'you shed in the very moment when I spared your life; such is the honor of a Spartan. Do you not deserve to die?'

"'Yes, for I am subdued, and by a slave. Strike!'

"'There,' said the Helot in a melancholy and altered tone, 'there speaks the soul of the Dorian, the fatal spirit to which the Gods have rendered up our wretched race. We are doomed—doomed—and one victim will not expiate our curse. Rise, return to Sparta, and forget that thou art innocent of murder.'

"He lifted his knee from my breast, and I rose, ashamed and humbled.

"At that instant I heard the crashing of the leaves in the wood, for the air was exceedingly still. I knew that my companions were at hand. 'Fly,' I cried; 'fly. If they come I cannot save thee, royal though I be. Fly.'

"'And *wouldest* thou save me!' said the Helot in surprise.

"'Ay, with my own life. Canst thou doubt it? Lose not a moment. Fly. Yet stay;' and I tore off a part of the woolen vest that I wore. 'Place this at thy side; staunch the blood, that it may not track thee. Now begone!'

"The Helot looked hard at me, and I thought there were tears in his rude eyes; then catching up the club with as much ease as I this staff, he sped with inconceivable rapidity, despite his wound, towards the precipice on the right, and disappeared amidst the thick brambles that clothed the gorge. In a few moments three of my companions approached. They found me exhausted, and panting rather with excitement than fatigue. Their quick eyes detected the blood upon the ground. I gave them no time to pause and examine. 'He has escaped me—he has fled,' I cried; 'follow,' and I led them to the opposite part of the precipice from that which the Helot had taken. Heading the search, I pretended to catch a glimpse of the goatskin ever and anon through the trees, and I stayed not the pursuit till night grew dark, and I judged the victim was far away."

"And he escaped?"

"He did. The crypteia ended. Three other Helots were slain, but not by me. We returned to Sparta, and my mother was comforted for my misfortune in not having slain my foe by seeing the stains on my grandsire's sword. I will tell thee a secret, Gongylus"—(and here Pausanias lowered his voice, and looked anxiously toward him)—"since that day I have not hated the Helot race. Nay, it may be that I have loved them better than the Dorian."

"I do not wonder at it; but has not your wounded giant yet met with his death?"

"No, I never related what had passed between us to any one save my father. He was gentle for a Spartan, and he rested not till Gylippus—so was the Helot named—obtained exemption from the black list. He dared not, however, attribute his intercession to the true cause. It happened, fortunately, that Gylippus was related to my own foster-brother, Alcman, brother to my nurse; and Alcman is celebrated in Sparta, not only for courage in war, but for arts in peace. He is a poet, and his strains please the Dorian ear, for they are stern and simple, and they breathe of war. Alcman's merits won forgiveness for the offences of Gylippus. May the Gods be kind to his race!"

"Your Alcman seems one of no common intelligence, and your gentleness to him does not astonish me, though it seems often to raise a frown on the brows of your Spartans."

"We have lain on the same bosom," said Pausanias touchingly, "and his mother was kinder to me than my own. You must know that to those Helots who have been our foster brothers, and whom we distinguish by the name of Mothons, our stern law relaxes. They have no rights of citizenship, it is true, but they cease to be slaves; * nay, sometimes they attain not only to entire emancipation, but to distinction, Alcman has bound his fate to mine. But to return, Gongylus. I tell thee

* The appellation of Mothons was not confined to the Helots who claimed the connection of foster brothers, but was also given to household slaves.

that it is not thy descriptions of pomp and dominion that allure me, though I am not above the love of power, neither is it thy glowing promises, though blood too wild for a Dorian runs riot in my veins; but it is my deep loathing, my inexpressible disgust for Sparta and her laws, my horror at the thought of wearing away life in those sullen customs, amid that joyless round of tyrannic duties, in my rapture at the hope of escape, of life in a land which the eye of the Ephor never pierces; this it is, and this alone, O Persian, that makes me (the words must out) a traitor to my country, one who dreams of becoming a dependent on her foe."

"Nay," said Gongylus eagerly; for here Pausanias moved uneasily, and the color mounted to his brow. "Nay, speak not of dependence. Consider the proposals that you can alone condescend to offer to the great king. Can the conqueror of Platæa, with millions for his subjects, hold himself dependent, even on the sovereign of the East? How, hereafter, will the memories of our sterile Greece and your rocky Sparta fade from your state of mind; or be remembered only as a thraldom and bondage, which your riper manhood has outgrown!"

"I will try to think so, at least," said Pausanias gloomily. "And, come what may, I am not one to recede. I have thrown my shield into a fearful peril; but I will win it back or perish. Enough of this, Gongylus. Night advances. I will attend the appointment you have made. Take the boat, and within an hour I will meet you with the prisoners at the spot agreed on, near the Temple of Aphrodite. All things are prepared?"

"All," said Gongylus, rising, with a gleam of malignant joy on his dark face. "I leave thee, kingly slave of the rocky Sparta, to prepare the way for thee, as Satrap of half the East."

So saying he quitted the awning, and motioned three Egyptian sailors who lay on the deck without. A boat was lowered, and the sound of its oars woke Pausanias from the reverie into which the parting words of the Eretrian had plunged his mind.

CHAPTER III.

WITH a slow and thoughtful step, Pausanias passed on to the outer deck. The moon was up, and the vessel scarcely seemed to stir, so gently did it glide along the sparkling waters. They were still within the bay, and the shores rose, white and distinct, to his view. A group of Spartans, reclining by the side of the ship, were gazing listlessly on the waters. The Regent paused beside them.

"Ye weary of the ocean, methinks," said he. "We Dorians have not the merchant tastes of the Ionians." *

"Son of Cleombrotus," said one of the group, a Spartan whose rank and services entitled him to more than ordinary familiarity with the chief, "it is not the ocean itself that we should dread, it is the contagion of those who, living on the element, seem to share in its ebb and flow. The Ionians are never three hours in the same mind."

"For that reason," said Pausanias, fixing his eye steadfastly on the Spartan, "for that reason I have judged it advisable to adopt a rough manner with those innovators, to draw with a broad chalk the line between them and the Spartans, and to teach those who never knew discipline the stern duties of obedience. Think you I have done wisely?"

The Spartan, who had risen when Pausanias addressed him, drew his chief a little aside from the rest.

"Pausanias," said he, "the hard Naxian stone best tames and tempers the fine steel; † but the steel may break if the workman be not skilful. These Athenians are grown insolent since Marathon, and their soft kindred of Asia have relighted the fires they took of old from the Cecropian Prytaneum. Their sail is more numerous than ours; on the sea they find the courage they lose on land. Better be gentle with those wayward allies, for the Spartan greyhound shows not his teeth but to bite."

"Perhaps you are right. I will consider these things, and appease the mutineers. But it goes hard with my pride, Thrasyllus, to make equals of this soft-tongued race. Why, these Ionians, do they not enjoy themselves in perpetual holidays?—spend days at the

* No Spartan served as a sailor, or indeed condescended to any trade or calling, but that of war.

† Pind. Isth. v. (vi.) 73.

banquet?—ransack earth and sea for dainties and for perfumes?—and shall they be the equals of us men, who, from the age of seven to that of sixty, are wisely taught to make life so barren and toilsome, that we may well have no fear of death? I hate these sleek and merry feast-givers; they are a perpetual insult to our solemn existence."

There was a strange mixture of irony and passion in the Spartan's voice as he thus spoke, and Thrasyllus looked at him in grave surprise.

"There is nothing to envy in the woman-like debaucheries of the Ionian," said he, after a pause.

"Envy! no; we only hate them, Thrasyllus. Yon Eretrian tells me rare things of the East. Time may come when we shall sup on the black broth in Susa."

"The Gods forbid! Sparta never invades. Life with us is too precious, for we are few. Pausanias, I would we were well quit of Byzantium. I do not suspect you, not I; but there are those who looked with vexed eyes on those garments, and I, who love you, fear the sharp jealousies of the Ephors, to whose ears the birds carry all tidings."

"My poor Thrasyllus," said Pausanias, laughing scornfully, "think you that I wear these robes, or mimic the Median manners, for love of the Mede? No, no! But there are arts which save countries as well as those of war. This Gongylus is in the confidence of Xerxes. I desire to establish a peace for Greece upon everlasting foundations. Reflect; Persia hath millions yet left. Another invasion may find a different fortune; and even at the best, Sparta gains nothing by these wars. Athens triumphs, not Lacedæmon. I would, I say, establish a peace with Persia. I would that Sparta, not Athens, should have that honor. Hence these flatteries to the Persian—trivial to us who render them, sweet and powerful to those who receive. Remember these words hereafter, if the Ephors make question of my discretion. And now, Thrasyllus, return to our friends, and satisfy them as to the conduct of Pausanias."

Quitting Thrasyllus, the Regent now joined a young Spartan who stood alone by the prow in a musing attitude.

"Lysander, my friend, my only friend, my best-loved Lysander," said Pausanias, placing his hand on the Spartan's shoulder. "And why so sad?"

"How many leagues are we from Sparta?" answered the Lysander mournfully.

"And canst thou sigh for the black broth, my friend? Come, how often hast thou said, 'Where Pausanias is, *there* is Sparta!'"

"Forgive me, I am ungrateful," said Lysander with warmth. "My benefactor, my guardian, my hero, forgive me if I have added to your own countless causes of anxiety. Whereever you come there is life, and there glory. When I was just born, sickly and feeble, I was exposed on Taygetus. You, then a boy, heard my faint cry, and took on me that compassion which my parents had forsworn. You bore me to your father's roof, you interceded for my life. You prevailed even on your stern mother. I was saved; and the Gods smiled upon the infant whom the son of the humane Hercules protected. I grew up strong and hardy, and belied the signs of my birth. My parents then owned me; but still you were my fosterer, my saviour, my more than father. As I grew up, placed under your care, I imbibed my first lessons of war. By your side I fought, and from your example I won glory. Yes, Pausanias, even here, amidst luxuries which revolt me more than the Parthian bow and the Persian sword, even amidst the faces of the stranger, I still feel thy presence my home, thyself my Sparta."

The proud Pausanias was touched, and his voice trembled as he replied, "Brother in arms and in love, whatever service fate may have allowed me to render unto thee, thy high nature and thy cheering affection have more than paid me back. Often in our lonely rambles amidst the dark oaks of the sacred Scotitas,* or by the wayward waters of Tiasa,† when I have poured into thy faithful breast my impatient loathing, my ineffable distaste for the iron life, the countless and wearisome tyrannies of custom which surround the Spartans, often have I found a consoling refuge in thy divine contentment, thy cheerful wisdom. Thou lovest Sparta; why is she not worthier of thy love? Allowed only to be half men, in war we are demigods, in peace, slaves. Thou wouldst interrupt me. Be silent. I am in a willful mood; thou canst

* Paus. Lac. x. † *Ib.* c. xviii.

not comprehend me, and I often marvel at thee. Still we are friends, such friends as the Dorian discipline, which makes friendship necessary in order to endure life, alone can form. Come, take up thy staff and mantle. Thou shalt be my companion ashore. I seek one whom alone in the world I love better than thee. To-morrow to stern duties once more. Alcman shall row us across the bay, and as we glide along, if thou wilt praise Sparta, I will listen to thee as the Ionians listened to their tale-tellers. Ho! Alcman, stop the rowers, and lower the boat."

The orders were obeyed, and a second boat soon darted towards the same part of the bay as that to which the one that bore Gongylus had directed its course. Thrasyllus and his companions watched the boat that bore Pausanias and his two comrades, as it bounded, arrow-like, over the glassy sea.

"Whither goes Pausanias?" asked one of the Spartans.

"Back to Byzantium on business," replied Thrasyllus.

"And we?"

"Are to cruise in the bay till his return."

"Pausanias is changed."

"Sparta will restore him to what he was. Nothing thrives out of Sparta. Even man spoils."

"True, sleep is the sole constant friend, the same in all climates."

CHAPTER IV.

On the shore to the right of the port of Byzantium were at that time thickly scattered the villas or suburban retreats of the wealthier and more luxurious citizens. Byzantium was originally colonized by the Megarians, a Dorian race kindred with that of Sparta; and the old features of the pure and antique Hellas were still preserved in the dialect,* as well as in the forms of the descendants of the colonists; in their favorite deities, and rites, and traditions; even in the names of places, transferred from the sterile Megara to that fertile coast; in the rigid and helot like slavery to which the native Bithynians were subjected, and in the attachment of their masters to the oligarchic principles of government. Nor was it till long after the present date, that democracy in its most corrupt and licentious form was introduced amongst them. But like all the Dorian colonies, when once they departed from the severe and masculine mode of life inherited from their ancestors, the reaction was rapid, the degeneracy complete.

Even then the Byzantines, intermingled with the foreign merchants and traders that thronged their haven, and womanized by the soft contagion of the East, were voluptuous, timid, and prone to every excess save that of valor. The higher class were exceedingly wealthy, and gave to their vices or their pleasures a splendor and refinement of which the elder states of Greece were as yet unconscious. At a later period, indeed, we are informed that the Byzantine citizens had their habitual residence in the public hostels, and let their houses —not even taking the trouble to remove their wives—to the strangers who crowded their gay capital. And when their general found it necessary to demand their aid on the ramparts, he could only secure their attendance by ordering the tavern and cookshops to be removed to the place of duty. Not yet so far sunk in sloth and debauch, the Byzantines were nevertheless hosts eminently dangerous to the austerer manners of their Greek visitors. The people, the women, the delicious wine, the balm of the subduing climate served to tempt the senses and relax the mind. Like all the Dorians, when freed from primitive restraint, the higher class, that is, the descendants of the colonists, were in themselves an agreeable, jovial race. They had that strong bias to humor, to jest, to satire, which in their ancestral Megara gave birth to the Grecian comedy, and which lurked even beneath the pithy aphorisms and rude merry-making of the severe Spartan.

Such were the people with whom of late Pausanias had familiarly mixed, and with whose manners he contrasted, far too favorably for his honor and his peace, the habits of his countrymen.

It was in one of the villas we have described, the favorite abode of the rich Diagoras, and in an apartment connected with those more private recesses of the house appropriated to

* "The Byzantine dialect was in the time of Philip, as we know from the decree in Demosthenes, rich in Dorisms."—Müller on the Doric dialect.

the females, that two persons were seated by a window which commanded a wide view of the glittering sea below. One of these was an old man in a long robe that reached to his feet, with a bald head and a beard in which some dark hairs yet withstood the encroachments of the grey. In his well-cut features and large eyes were remains of the beauty that characterized his race; but the mouth was full and wide, the forehead low though broad, the cheeks swollen, the chin double, and the whole form corpulent and unwieldy. Still there was a jolly, sleek good humor about the aspect of the man that prepossessed you in his favor. This personage, who was no less than Diagoras himself, was reclining lazily upon a kind of narrow sofa cunningly inlaid with ivory, and studying new combinations in that scientific game which Palamedes is said to have invented at the siege of Troy.

His companion was of a very different appearance. She was a girl who to the eye of a northern stranger might have seemed about eighteen, though she was probably much younger, of a countenance so remarkable for intelligence that it was easy to see that her mind had outgrown her years. Beautiful she certainly was, yet scarcely of that beauty from which the Greek sculptor would have drawn his models. The features were not strictly regular, and yet so harmoniously did each blend with each, that to have amended one would have spoilt the whole. There was in the fulness and depth of the large but genial eye, with its sweeping fringe, and straight, slightly chiselled brow, more of Asia than of Greece. The lips, of the freshest red, were somewhat full and pouting, and dimples without number lay scattered round them—lurking places for the loves. Her complexion was clear though dark, and the purest and most virgin bloom mantled, now paler now richer, through the soft surface. At the time we speak of she was leaning against the open door with her arms crossed on her bosom, and her face turned towards the Byzantine. Her robe, of a deep yellow, so trying to the fair women of the North, became well the glowing colors of her beauty—the damask cheek, the purple hair. Like those of the Ionians, the sleeves of the robe, long and loose, descended to her hands, which were marvellously small and delicate. Long earrings, which terminated in a kind of berry, studded with precious stones, then common only with the women of the East; a broad collar, or necklace, of the smaragdus or emerald; and large clasps, medallion-like, where the swan-like throat joined the graceful shoulder, gave to her dress an appearance of opulence and splendor that betokened how much the ladies of Byzantium had borrowed from the fashions of the Oriental world.

Nothing could exceed the lightness of her form, rounded, it is true, but slight and girlish, and the high instep with the slender foot, so well set off by the embroidered sandal, would have suited such dances as those in which the huntress nymphs of Delos moved around Diana. The natural expression of her face, if countenance so mobile and changeful had one expression more predominant than another, appeared to be irresistibly arch and joyous, as of one full of youth and conscious of her beauty; yet, if a cloud came over the face, nothing could equal the thoughtful and deep sadness of the dark abstracted eyes, as if some touch of higher and more animated emotion—such as belongs to pride, or courage, or intellect vibrated on the heart. The color rose, the form dilated, the lip quivered, the eye flashed light, and the mirthful expression heightened almost into the sublime. Yet, lovely as Cleonice was deemed at Byzantium, lovelier still as she would have appeared in modern eyes, she failed in what the Greeks generally, but especially the Spartans, deemed an essential of beauty—in height of stature. Accustomed to look upon the virgin but as the future mother of a race of warriors, the Spartans saw beauty only in those proportions which promised a robust and stately progeny, and the reader may remember the well-known story of the opprobrious reproaches, even, it is said, accompanied with stripes, which the Ephors addressed to a Spartan king, for presuming to make choice of a wife below the ordinary stature. Cleonice was small and delicate, rather like the Peri of the Persian than the sturdy grace of the Dorian.

But her beauty was her least charm. She had all that feminine fascination of manner, wayward, varying, inexpressible, yet irresistible, which seizes hold of the imagination as well as the senses, and which has so often made willing slaves of the proud rulers of the

world. In fact Cleonice, the daughter of Diagoras, had enjoyed those advantages of womanly education wholly unknown at that time to the freeborn ladies of Greece proper, but which gave to the women of some of the isles and Ionian cities their celebrity in ancient story. Her mother was of Miletus, famed for the intellectual cultivation of the sex, no less than for their beauty—of Miletus, the birthplace of Aspasia—of Miletus, from which those remarkable women who, under the name of Hetaeræ, exercised afterwards so signal an influence over the mind and manners of Athens, chiefly derived their origin, and who seem to have inspired an affection, which in depth, constancy, and fervor, approached to the more chivalrous passion of the North? Such an education consisted not only in the feminine and household arts honored universally throughout Greece, but in a kind of spontaneous and luxuriant cultivation of all that captivates the fancy and enlivens the leisure. If there were something pedantic in their affectation of philosophy, it was so graced and vivified by a brillancy of conversation, a charm of manner carried almost to a science, a womanly facility of softening all that comes within their circle, of suiting yet refining each complexity and discord of character admitted to their intercourse, that it had at least nothing masculine or harsh.

Wisdom, taken lightly or easily, seemed but another shape of poetry. The matrons of Athens, who could often neither read nor write —ignorant, vain, tawdry, and not always faithful, if we may trust to such scandal as has reached the modern time—must have seemed insipid beside these brilliant strangers; and while certainly wanting their power to retain love, must have had but a doubtful superiority in the qualifications that ensure esteem. But we are not to suppose that the Hetaeræ (that mysterious and important class peculiar to a certain state of society, and whose appellation we cannot render by any proper word in modern language) monopolized all the graces of their countrywomen. In the same cities were many of unblemished virtue and repute, who possessed equal cultivation and attraction, but whom a more decorous life has concealed from the equivocal admiration of posterity; though the numerous female disciples of Pythagoras throw some light on their capacity and intellect. Among such as these had been the mother of Cleonice, not long since dead, and her daughter inherited and equalled her accomplishments, while her virgin youth, her inborn playfulness of manner, her pure guilelessness, which the secluded habits of the unmarried women at Byzantium preserved from all contagion, gave to qualities and gifts so little published abroad, the effect as it were of a happy and wondrous inspiration rather than of elaborate culture.

Such was the fair creature whom Diagoras, looking up from his pastime, thus addressed:—

"And so, perverse one, thou canst not love this great hero, a proper person truly, and a mighty warrior, who will eat you an army of Persians at a meal. These Spartan fighting-cocks want no garlic, I warrant you.* And yet you can't love him, you little rogue."

"Why, my father," said Cleonice, with an arch smile, and a slight blush, "even if I did look kindly on Pausanias, would it not be to my own sorrow? What Spartan—above all, what royal Spartan—may marry with a foreigner, and a Byzantine?'

"I did not precisely talk of marriage—a very happy state, doubtless, to those who dislike too quiet a life, and a very honorable one, for war is honor itself; but I did not speak of that, Cleonice. I would only say that this man of might loves thee—that he is rich, rich, rich. Pretty pickings at Platæa; and we have known losses, my child, sad losses. And if you do not love him, why, you can but smile and talk as if you did, and when the Spartan goes home, you will lose à tormentor and gain a dowry."

"My father, for shame!"

"Who talks of shame? You women are always so sharp at finding oracles in oak leaves, that one don't wonder Apollo makes choice of your sex for his priests. But listen to me, girl, seriously," and here Diagoras with a great effort raised himself on his elbow, and lowering his voice, spoke with evident earnestness. "Pausanias has life and death, and, what is worse, wealth or poverty in his hands; he can raise or ruin us with a nod of his head,

* Fighting-cocks were fed with garlic, to make them more fierce. The learned reader will remember how Theorus advised Dicæopolis to keep clear of the Thracians with garlic in their mouths.—See the Acharnians of Aristoph.

this black-curled Jupiter. They tell me that he is fierce, irascible, haughty; and what slighted lover is not revengeful? For my sake, Cleonice, for your poor father's sake, show no scorn, no repugnance; be gentle, play with him, draw not down the thunder-bolt, even if you turn from the golden shower."

While Diagoras spoke, the girl listened with downcast eyes and flushed cheeks, and there was an expression of such shame and sadness on her countenance that even the Byzantine, pausing and looking up for a reply, was startled by it.

"My child," said he, hesitatingly and absorbed, "do not misconceive me. Cursed be the hour when the Spartan saw thee; but since the Fates have so served us, let us not make bad worse. I love thee, Cleonice, more dearly than the apple of my eye; it is for *thee* I fear, for thee I speak. Alas! it is not dishonor I recommend, it is force I would shun."

"Force!" said the girl, drawing up her form with sudden animation. "Fear not that. It is not Pausanias I dread, it is——"

"What then?"

"No matter; talk of this no more. Shall I sing to thee?"

"But Pausanias will visit us this very night."

"I know it. Hark!" and with her finger to her lip, her ear bent downward, her cheek varying from pale to red, from red to pale, the maiden stole beyond the window to a kind of platform or terrace that overhung the sea. There, the faint breeze stirring her long hair, and the moonlight full upon her face, she stood, as stood that immortal priestess who looked along the starry Hellespont for the young Leander; and her ear had not deceived her. The oars were dashing in the waves below, and dark and rapid the boat bounded on towards the rocky shore. She gazed long and steadfastly on the dim and shadowy forms which that slender raft contained, and her eye detected amongst the three the loftier form of her haughty wooer. Presently the thick foliage that clothed the descent shut the boat, nearing the strand, from her view; but she now heard below, mellowed and softened in the still and fragrant air, the sound of the cithara and the melodious song of the Mothon, thus imperfectly rendered from the language of immortal melody.

SONG.

Carry a sword in the myrtle bough,
Ye who would honor the tyrant-slayer;
I, in the leaves of the myrtle bough,
Carry a tyrant to slay myself.

I pluck'd the branch with a hasty hand,
But Love was lurking amidst the leaves;
His bow is bent and his shaft is poised,
And I must perish or pass the bough.

Maiden, I come with a gift to thee,
Maiden, I come with a myrtle wreath;
Over thy forehead, or round thy breast
Bind, I implore thee, my myrtle wreath. *

From hand to hand by the banquet lights
On with the myrtle bough passes song:
From hand to hand by the silent stars
What with the myrtle wreath passes? Love.

I bear the god in a myrtle wreath,
Under the stars let him pass to thee;
Empty his quiver and bind his wings,
Then pass the myrtle wreath back to me.

Cleonice listened breathlessly to the words, and sighed heavily as they ceased. Then, as the foliage rustled below, she turned quickly into the chamber and seated herself at a little distance from Diagoras; to all appearance calm, indifferent, and composed. Was it nature, or the arts of Miletus, that taught the young beauty the hereditary artifices of the sex?

"So it is he, then?" said Diagoras, with a fidgety and nervous trepidation. "Well, he chooses strange hours to visit us. But he is right; his visits cannot be too private. Cleonice, you look provokingly at your ease."

Cleonice made no reply, but shifted her position so that the light from the lamp did not fall upon her face, while her father, hurrying to the threshold of his hall to receive his illustrious visitor, soon re-appeared with the Spartan Regent, talking as he entered with the volubility of one of the parasites of Alciphron and Athenæus.

"This is most kind, most affable. Cleonice said you would come, Pausanias, though I began to distrust you. The hours seem long to those who expect pleasure."

"And, Cleonice, *you* knew that I should come," said Pausanias, approaching the fair

* Garlands were twined round the neck, or placed upon the bosom (ὑποθυμίαδες). See the quotations from Alcæus, Sappho, and Anacreon in Athenæus, book xiii., c. 17.

Byzantine; but his step was timid, and there was no pride now in his anxious eye and bended brow.

"You said you would come to-night," said Cleonice, calmly, "and Spartans, according to proverbs, speak the truth."

"When it is to their advantage, yes,"* said Pausanias, with a slight curl of his lips; and, as if the girl's compliment to his countrymen had roused his spleen and changed his thoughts, he seated himself moodily by Cleonice, and remained silent.

The Byzantine stole an arch glance at the Spartan, as he thus sat, from the corner of her eyes, and said, after a pause—

"You Spartans ought to speak the truth more than other people, for you say much less. We too have our proverb at Byzantium, and one which implies that it requires some wit to tell fibs."

"Child, child!" exclaimed Diagoras, holding up his hand reprovingly, and directing a horrified look at the Spartan. To his great relief, Pausanias smiled, and replied—

"Fair maiden, we Dorians are said to have a wit peculiar to ourselves, but I confess that it is of a nature that is but little attractive to your sex. The Athenians are blander wooers."

"Do you ever attempt to woo in Lacedæmon, then? Ah, but the maidens there, perhaps, are not difficult to please."

"The girl puts me in a cold sweat!" muttered Diagoras, wiping his brow. And this time Pausanias did not smile; he colored, and answered gravely—

And is it, then a vain hope for a Spartan to please a Byzantine?"

"You puzzle me. That is an enigma; put it to the oracle."

The Spartan raised his eyes towards Cleonice, and, as she saw the inquiring, perplexed look that his features assumed, the ruby lips broke into so wicked a smile, and the eyes that met his had so much laughter in them, that Pausanias was fairly bewitched out of his own displeasure.

"Ah, cruel one!" said he, lowering his voice, "I am not so proud of being Spartan that the thought should console me for thy mockery."

"Not proud of being Spartan! say not so," exclaimed Cleonice. "Whoever speaks of Greece and places not Sparta at her head? Whoever speaks of freedom and forgets Thermopylæ? Whoever burns for glory, and sighs not for the fame of Pausanias and Platæa? Ah, yes, even in jest say not that you are not proud to be a Spartan!"

"The little fool!" cried Diagoras, chuckling, and mightily delighted; "she is quite mad about Sparta—no wonder!"

Pausanias, surprised and moved by the burst of the fair Byzantine, gazed at her admiringly, and thought within himself how harshly the same sentiment would have sounded on the lips of a tall Spartan virgin; but when Cleonice heard the approving interlocution of Diagoras, her enthusiasm vanished from her face, and putting out her lips poutingly, she said, "Nay, father, I repeat only what others say of the Spartans. They are admirable heroes; but from the little I have seen, they are——"

"What?" said Pausanias eagerly, and leaning nearer to Cleonice.

"Proud, dictatorial, and stern as companions."

Pausanias once more drew back.

"There it is again!" groaned Diagoras. "I feel exactly as if I were playing at odd and even with a lion; she does it to vex me. I shall retaliate and creep away."

"Cleonice," said Pausanias, with suppressed emotion, "you trifle with me, and I bear it."

"You are condescending. How would you avenge yourself?"

"How!"

"You would not beat me; you would not make me bear an anchor on the shoulders, as they say you do your soldiers. Shame on you! *you* bear with me! true, what help for you?"

"Maiden," said the Spartan, rising in great anger, "for him who loves and is slighted there is a revenge you have not mentioned."

"For him who *loves!* No, Spartan; for him who shuns disgrace and courts the fame dear to gods and men, there is no revenge upon women. Blush for your threat."

"You madden, but subdue me," said the Spartan as he turned away. He then first

* So said Thucydides of the Spartans, many years afterwards. "They give evidence of honor among themselves, but with respect to others, they consider honorable whatever pleases them, and just whatever is to their advantage."—See Thucyd., lib. v.

perceived that Diagoras had gone—that they were alone. His contempt for the father awoke suspicion of the daughter. Again he approached and said, "Cleonice, I know but little of the fables of poets, yet is it an old maxim often sung and ever belied, that love scorned becomes hate. There are moments when I think I hate thee."

"And yet thou hast never loved me," said Cleonice; and there was something soft and tender in the tone of her voice, and the rough Spartan was again subdued."

"I never loved thee! What, then, is love? Is not thine image always before me?—amidst schemes, amidst perils of which thy very dreams have never presented equal perplexity or phantoms so uncertain, I am occupied but with thee. Surely, as upon the hyacinth is written the exclamation of woe, so on this heart is graven thy name. Cleonice, you who know not what it is to love, you affect to deny or to question mine."

"And what," said Cleonice, blushing deeply, and with tears in her eyes, "what result can come from such a love? You may not wed with the stranger. And yet, Pausanias, yet you know that all other love dishonors the virgin even of Byzantium. You are silent; you turn away. Ah, do not let them wrong you. My father fears your power. If you love me you are powerless; your power has passed to me. It is not so? I, a weak girl, can rule, command, irritate, mock you, if I will. You may fly me, but not control."

"Do not tempt me too far, Cleonice," said the Spartan, with a faint smile.

"Nay, I will be merciful henceforth, and you, Pausanias, come here no more. Awake to the true sense of what is due to your divine ancestry—your great name. Is it not told of you that, after the fall of Mardonius, you nobly dismised to her country, unscathed and honored, the captive Coan lady? * Will you reverse at Byzantium the fame acquired at Platæa? Pausanias, spare us; appeal not to my father's fear, still less to his love of gold"

"I cannot, I cannot fly thee," said the Spartan, with great emotion. "You know not how stormy, how inexorable are the passions which burst forth after a whole youth of restraint. When nature breaks the barriers, she rushes headlong on her course. I am no gentle wooer; where in Sparta should I learn the art? But, if I love thee not as these mincing Ionians, who come with offerings of flowers and song, I do love thee with all that fervor of which the old Dorian legends tell. I could brave, like the Thracian, the dark gates of Hades, were thy embrace my reward. Command me as thou wilt—make me thy slave in all things, even as Hercules was to Omphale; but tell me only that I may win thy love at last. Fear not. Why fear me? in my wildest moments a look from thee can control me. I ask but love for love. Without thy love thy beauty were valueless. Bid me not despair."

Cleonice turned pale, and the large tears that had gathered in her eyes fell slowly down her cheeks; but she did not withdraw her hand from his clasp, or avert her countenance from his eyes.

"I do not fear thee," said she, in a very low voice. "I told my father so; but—but—" (and here she drew back her hand and averted her face), "I fear myself."

"Ah, no, no," cried the delighted Spartan, detaining her, "do not fear to trust to thine own heart. Talk not of dishonor. There are" (and here the Spartan drew himself up, and his voice took a deeper swell)—"there are those on earth who hold themselves above the miserable judgments of the vulgar herd—who can emancipate themselves from those galling chains of custom and of country which helotize affection, genius, nature herself. What is dishonor here may be glory elsewhere; and this hand, outstretched towards a mightier sceptre than Greek ever wielded yet, may dispense, not shame and sorrow, but glory and golden affluence to those I love."

"You amaze me, Pausanias. *Now* I fear you. What mean these mysterious boasts? Have you the dark ambition to restore in your own person that race of tyrants whom your country hath helped to sweep away? Can you hope to change the laws of Sparta, and reign there, your will the state?"

"Cleonice, we touch upon matters that should not disturb the ears of women. Forgive me if I have been roused from myself."

"At Miletus—so have I heard my mother say—there were women worthy to be the confidants of men."

"But they were women who loved. Cleonice,

* Herod. ix.

I should rejoice in an hour when I might pour every thought into thy bosom."

At this moment there was heard on the strand below a single note from the Mothon's instrument, low, but prolonged; it ceased, and was again renewed. The royal conspirator started and breathed hard.

"It is the signal," he muttered; "they wait me. Cleonice," he said aloud, and with much earnestness in his voice, "I had hoped, ere we parted, to have drawn from your lips those assurances which would give me energy for the present and hope in the future. Ah, turn not from me because my speech is plain and my manner rugged. What, Cleonice, what if I could defy the laws of Sparta; what if, instead of that gloomy soil, I could bear thee to lands where heaven and man alike smile benignant on love? Might I not hope then?"

"Do nothing to sully your fame."

"Is it, then, dear to thee?"

"It is a part of thee," said Cleonice falteringly; and, as if she had said too much, she covered her face with her hands.

Emboldened by this emotion, the Spartan gave way to his passion and his joy. He clasped her in his arms—his first embrace—and kissed, with wild fervor, the crimsoned forehead, the veiling hands. Then, as he tore himself away, he cast his right arm aloft.

"O Hercules!" he cried, in solemn and kindling adjuration, "my ancestor and my divine guardian, it was not by confining thy labors to one spot of earth that thou wert borne from thy throne of fire to the seats of the Gods. Like thee I will spread the influence of my arms to the nations whose glory shall be my name: and as thy sons, my fathers, expelled from Sparta, returned thither with sword and spear to defeat usurpers and to found the long dynasty of the Heracleids, even so may it be mine to visit that dread abode of torturers and spies, and to build up in the halls of the Atridæ a power worthier of the lineage of the demigod. Again the signal! Fear nor, Cleonice, I will not tarnish my fame, but I will exchange the envy of abhorring rivals for the obedience of a world. One kiss more! Farewell!"

Ere Cleonice recovered herself, Pausanias was gone, his wild and uncomprehended boasts still ringing in her ear. She sighed heavily, and turned towards the opening that admitted to the terraces. There she stood watching for the parting of her lover's boat. It was midnight; the air, laden with the perfumes of a thousand fragrant shrubs and flowers that bloom along that coast in the rich luxuriance of nature, was hushed and breathless. In its stillness every sound was audible, the rustling of a leaf, the ripple of a wave. She heard the murmur of whispered voices below, and in a few moments she recognized, emerging from the foliage, the form of Pausanias; but he was not alone.. Who were his companions? In the deep lustre of that shining and splendid atmosphere she could see sufficient of the outline of their figures to observe that they were not dressed in the Grecian garb; their long robes betrayed the Persian.

They seemed conversing familiarly and eagerly as they passed along the smooth sands, till a curve in the wooded shore hid them from her view.

"Why do I love him so," said the girl mechanically, "and yet wrestle against that love? Dark forebodings tell me that Aphrodite smiles not on our vows. Woe is me! What will be the end?"

CHAPTER V.

On quitting Cleonice, Pausanias hastily traversed the long passage that communicated with a square peristyle or colonnade, which again led, on the one hand, to the more public parts of the villa, and, on the other, through a small door left ajar, conducted by a back entrance to the garden and the sea-shore. Pursuing the latter path, the Spartan bounded down the descent and came upon an opening in the foilage, in which Lysander was seated beside the boat that had been drawn partially on the strand.

"Alone? Where is Alcman?"

"Yonder; you heard his signal?"

"I heard it."

"Pausanias, they who seek you are Persians. Beware!"

"Of what? murder? I am warned.'

"Murder to your good name. There are no arms against appearances."

"But I may trust thee?" said the Regent, quickly, "and of Alcman's faith am convinced."

"Why trust to any man what it were wisdom to reveal to the whole Grecian Council? To parley secretly with the foe is half a treason to our friends."

"Lysander," replied Pausanias, coldly, "you have much to learn before you can be wholly Spartan. Tarry here yet awhile."

"What shall I do with this boy?" muttered the conspirator as he strode on. "I know that he will not betray me, yet can I hope for his aid? I love him so well that I would fain he shared my fortunes. Perhaps by little and little I may lead him on. Meanwhile, his race and his name are so well accredited in Sparta, his father himself an Ephor, that his presence allays suspicion. Well, here are my Persians."

"A little apart from the Mothon, who, resting his cithara on a fragment of rock, appeared to be absorbed in reflection, stood the men of the East. There were two of them; one of tall stature and noble presence, in the prime of life; the other more advanced in years, of a coarser make, a yet darker complexion, and of a sullen and gloomy countenance. They were not dressed alike; the taller, a Persian of pure blood, wore a short tunic that reached only to the knees: and the dress fitted to his shape without a single fold. On his round cap or bonnet, glittered a string of those rare pearls, especially and immemorially prized in the East, which formed the favorite and characteristic ornament of the illustrious tribe of the Pasargadæ. The other, who was a Mede, differed scarcely in his dress from Pausanias himself, except that he was profusely covered with ornaments; his arms were decorated with bracelets, he wore earrings, and a broad collar of unpolished stones in a kind of filagree was suspended from his throat. Behind the Orientals stood Gongylus, leaning both hands on his staff, and watching the approach of Pausanias with the same icy smile and glittering eye with which he listened to the passionate invectives or flattered the dark ambition of the Spartan. The Orientals saluted Pausanias with a lofty gravity, and Gongylus drawing near, said: "Son of Cleombrotus, the illustrious Ariamanes, kinsman to Xerxes, and of the House of the Achæmenids, is so far versed in the Grecian tongue that I need not proffer my offices as interpreter. In Datis, the Mede, brother to the most renowned of the Magi, you behold a warrior worthy to assist the arms even of Pausanias."

"I greet ye in our Spartan phrase, 'The beautful to the good,'" said Pausanias regarding the Barbarians with an earnest gaze. "And I requested Gongylus to lead ye hither in order that I might confer with ye more at case than in the confinement to which I regret ye are still sentenced. Not in prisons should be held the conversations of brave men."

"I know," said Ariamanes (the statelier of the Barbarians), in the Greek tongue, which he spoke intelligibly indeed, but with slowness and hesitation, "I know that I am with that hero who refused to dishonor the corpse of Mardonius, and even though a captive I converse without shame with my victor."

"Rested it with me alone, your captivity should cease," replied Pausanias. "War, that has made me acquainted with the valor of the Persians, has also enlightened me as to their character. Your king has ever been humane to such of the Greeks as have sought a refuge near his throne. I would but imitate his clemency."

"Had the great Darius less esteemed the Greeks he would never have invaded Greece. From the wanderers whom misfortune drove to his realms, he learned to wonder at the arts, the genius, the energies of the people of Hellas. He desired less to win their territories than to gain such subjects. Too vast, alas, was the work he bequeathed to Xerxes."

"He should not have trusted to force alone," returned Pausanias. "Greece may be won, but by the arts of her sons, not by the arms of the stranger. A Greek only can subdue Greece. By such profound knowledge of the factions, the interests, the envies and the jealousies of each state as a Greek alone can possess, the mistaken chain that binds them might be easily severed; some bought, some intimidated, and the few that hold out subdued amidst the apathy of the rest."

"You speak wisely, right hand of Hellas," answered the Persian, who had listened to these remarks with deep attention. "Yet had we in our armies your countryman, the brave Demaratus,"

"But, if I have heard rightly, ye too often disdained his counsel. Had he been listened to there had been neither a Salamis nor a

Platæa.* Yet Demaratus himself had been too long a stranger to Greece, and he knew little of any state save that of Sparta. Lives he still?"

"Surely yes, in honor and renown? little less than the son of Darius himself."

"And what reward would Xerxes bestow on one of greater influence than Demaratus; on one who has hitherto conquered every foe, and now beholds before him the conquest of Greece herself?"

"If such a man were found," answered the Persian, "let his thought run loose, let his imagination rove, let him seek only how to find a fitting estimate of the gratitude of the king and the vastness of the service."

Pausanias shaded his brow with his hand, and mused a few moments; then lifting his eyes to the Persian's watchful but composed countenance, he said, with a slight smile—

"Hard is it, O Persian, when the choice is actually before him, for a man to renounce his country. There have been hours within this very day when my desires swept afar from Sparta, from all Hellas, and rested on the tranquil pomp of Oriental Satrapies. But now, rude and stern parent though Sparta be to me, I feel still that I am her son; and, while we speak, a throne in stormy Hellas seems the fitting object of a Greek's ambition. In a word, then, I would rise, and yet raise my country. I would have at my will a force that may suffice to overthrow in Sparta its grim and unnatural laws, to found amidst its rocks that single throne which the son of a demigod should ascend. From that throne I would spread my empire over the whole of Greece, Corinth and Athens being my tributaries. So that, though men now, and posterity hereafter, may say, 'Pausanias overthrew the Spartan government,' they shall add, 'but Pausanias annexed to the Spartan sceptre the realm of Greece. Pausanias was a tyrant, but not a traitor.' How, O Persian, can these designs accord with the policy of the Persian king?"

"Not without the authority of my master can I answer thee," replied Ariamanes, "so that my answer may be as the king's signet to his decree. But so much at least I say: that it is not the custom of the Persians to interfere with the institutions of those states with which they are connected. Thou desirest to make a monarchy of Greece, with Sparta for its head. Be it so; the king my master will aid thee so to scheme and so to reign, provided thou dost but concede to him a vase of the water from thy fountains, a fragment of earth from thy gardens."

"In other words," said Pausanias thoughtfully, but with a slight color on his brow, "if I hold my dominions tributary to the king?"

"The dominions that by the king's aid thou wilt have conquered. Is that a hard law?"

"To a Greek and a Spartan the very mimicry of allegiance to the foreigner is hard."

The Persian smiled. "Yet, if I understand thee aright, O Chief, even kings in Sparta are but subjects to their people, Slave to a crowd at home; or tributary to a throne abroad; slave every hour, or tributary of earth and water once a year, which is the freer lot?"

"Thou canst not understand our Grecian notions," replied Pausanias, "nor have I leisure to explain them. But though I may subdue Sparta to myself as to its native sovereign, I will not, even by a type, subdue the land of the Heraclied to the Barbarian."

Ariamanes looked grave; the difficulty raised was serious. And here the craft of Gongylus interposed.

"This may be adjusted, Ariamanes, as befits both parties. Let Pausanias rule in Sparta as he lists, and, Sparta stand free of tribute. But for all other states and cities that Pausanias, aided by the great king, shall conquer, let the vase be filled, and the earth be Grecian. Let him but render tribute for those lands which the Persians submit to his sceptre. So shall the pride of the Spartan he appeased, and the claims of the king be satisfied."

"Shall it be so?" said Pausanias.

"Instruct me so to propose to my master, and I will do my best to content him with the exception to the wonted rights of the Persian

* After the action of Thermopylæ, Demaratus advised Xerxes to send three hundred vessels to the Laconian coast, and seize the island of Cythera, which commanded Sparta. "The profound experience of Demaratus in the selfish and exclusive policy of his countrymen made him argue that if this were done the fear of Sparta for herself would prevent her joining the forces of the rest of Greece, and leave the latter a more easy prey to the invader."—*Athens, its Rise and Fall.* This advice was overruled by Achæmenes. So again, had the advice of Artemisia, the Carian princess, been taken—to delay the naval engagement of Salamis, and rather to sail to the Peloponnesus—the Greeks, failing of provisions, and divided among themselves, would probably have dispersed.

diadem. And then," continued Ariamanes, "then, Pausanias, Conqueror of Mardonius, Captain at Platæa, thou art indeed a man with whom the lord of Asia may treat as an equal. Greeks before thee have offered to render Greece to the king my master; but they were exiles and fugitives, they had nothing to risk or lose; thou hast fame, and command, and power, and riches, and all——"

"But for a throne," interrupted Gongylus.

"It does not matter what may be my motives," returned the Spartan gloomily, "and were I to tell them, you might not comprehend. But so much by way of explanation. You too have held command?"

"I have."

"If you knew that, when power became to you so sweet that it was as necessary to life itself as food and drink, it would then be snatched from you for ever, and you would serve as a soldier in the very ranks you had commanded as a leader; if you knew that no matter what your services, your superiority your desires, this shameful fall was inexorably doomed, might you not see humiliation in power itself, obscurity in renown, gloom in the present, despair in the future? And would it not seem to you nobler even to desert the camp than to sink into a subaltern?"

"Such a prospect has in our country made out of good subjects fierce rebels," observed the Persian.

"Ay, ay, I doubt it not," said Pausanias, laughing bitterly. "Well, then, such will be my lot, if I pluck not out a fairer one from the Fatal Urn. As Regent of Sparta, while my nephew is beardless, I am general of her armies, and I have the sway and functions of her king. When he arrives at the customary age, I am a subject, a citizen, a nothing, a miserable fool of memories gnawing my heart away amidst joyless customs and stern austerities, with the recollection of the glories of Platæa and the delights of Byzantium. Persian, I am filled from the crown to the sole with the desire of power, with the tastes of pleasure. I have that within me which before my time has made heroes and traitors, raised demigods to Heaven, or chained the lofty Titans to the rocks of Hades. Something I may yet be; I know not what. But as the man never returns to the boy, so never, never, never once more, can I be again the Spartan subject. Enough; such as I am, I can fulfil what I have said to thee. Will thy king accept me as his ally, and ratify the terms I have proposed!"

"I feel well-nigh assured of it," answered the Persian; "for since thou hast spoken thus boldly, I will answer thee in the same strain. Know, then, that we of the pure race of Persia, we the sons of those who overthrew the Mede, and extended the race of the mountain tribe, from the Scythian to the Arab, from Egypt to Ind, we at least feel that no sacrifice were too great to redeem the disgrace we have suffered at the hands of thy countrymen; and the world itself were too small an empire, too confined a breathing-place for the son of Darius, if this nook of earth were still left without the pale of his dominion.

"This nook of earth? Ay, but Sparta itself must own no lord but me."

"It is agreed."

"If I release thee, wilt thou bear these offers to the king, travelling day and night till thou restest at the foot of his throne?"

"I should carry tidings too grateful to suffer me to loiter by the road."

"And Datis, he comprehends us not; but his eyes glitter fiercely on me. It is easy to see that thy comrade loves not the Greek."

"For that reason he will aid us well. Though but a Mede, and not admitted to the privileges of the Pasargadæ, his relationship to the most powerful and learned of our Magi, and his own services in war, have won him such influence with both priests and soldiers, that I would fain have him as my companion. I will answer for his fidelity to our joint object."

"Enough; ye are both free. Gongylus, you will now conduct our friends to the place where the steeds await them. You will then privately return to the citadel, and give to their pretended escape the probable appearances we devised. Be quick, while it is yet night. One word more. Persian, our success depends upon thy speed. It is while the Greeks are yet at Byzantium, while I yet am in command, that we should strike the blow. If the king consent, through Gongylus thou wilt have means to advise me. A Persian army must march at once to the Phrygian confines, instructed to yield command to me when the hour comes to assume it. Delay not that aid by such vast and profitless recruits as swelled

the pomp, but embarrassed the arms, of Xerxes. Armies too large rot by their own unwieldiness into decay. A band of 50,000, composed solely of the Medes and Persians, will more than suffice. With such an army, if my command be undisputed, I will win a second Platæa, but against the Greek."

"Your suggestion shall be law. May Ormuzd favor the bold!"

"Away, Gongylus. You know the rest."

Pausanias followed with thoughtful eyes the receding forms of Gongylus and the Barbarians. "I have passed for ever," he muttered, "the pillars of Hercules. I must go on or perish. If I fall, I die execrated and abhorred; if I succeed, the sound of the choral flutes will drown the hootings. Be it as it may, I do not and will not repent. If the wolf gnaw my entrails, none shall hear me groan." He turned and met the eyes of Alcman, fixed on him so intently, so exultingly, that, wondering at their strange expression, he drew back and said haughtily, "You imitate Medusa, but I am stone already."

"Nay," said the Mothon, in a voice of great humility, "if you are of stone, it is like the divine one which, when borne before armies, secures their victory. Blame me not that I gazed on you with triumph and hope. For, while you conferred with the Persian, methought the murmurs that reached my ear sounded thus: 'When Pausanias shall rise, Sparta shall bend low, and the Helot shall break his chains.'"

"They do not hate me, these Helots?"

"You are the only Spartan they love."

"Were my life in danger from the Ephors ——"

"The Helots would rise to a man."

"Did I plant my standard on Taygetus, though all Sparta encamped against it——"

"All the slaves would cut their way to thy side. O Pausanias, think how much nobler it were to reign over tens of thousands who become freemen at thy word, than to be but the equal of 10,000 tyrants."

"The Helots fight well, when well led," said Pausanias, as if to himself. "Launch the boat."

"Pardon me, Pausanias, but is it prudent any longer to trust Lysander? He is the pattern of the Spartan youth, and Sparta is his mistress. He loves her too well not to blab to her every secret."

"O Sparta, Sparta, wilt thou not leave me one friend?" exclaimed Pausanias. "No, Alcman, I will not separate myself from Lysander, till I despair of his alliance. To your oars! be quick."

At the sound of the Mathon's tread upon the pebbles, Lysander, who had hitherto remained motionless, reclining by the boat, rose and advanced towards Pausanias. There was in his countenance, as the moon shining on it cast over his statue-like features a pale and marble hue, so much of anxiety, of affection, of fear, so much of the evident, unmistakable solicitude of friendship, that Pausanias, who, like most men, envied and unloved, was susceptible even of the semblance of attachment, muttered to himself, "No, thou wilt not desert me, nor I thee."

"My friend, my Pausanias," said Lysander, as he approached, "I have had fears—I have seen omens. Undertake nothing, I beseech thee, which thou hast meditated this night."

"And what hast thou seen?" said Pausanias, with a slight change of countenance.

"I was praying the Gods for thee and Sparta, when a star shot suddenly from the heavens. Pausanias, this is the eighth year, the year in which on moonless nights the Ephors watch the heavens."

"And if a star fall they judge their kings," interrupted Pausanias (with a curl of his haughty lip), "to have offended the Gods, and suspend them from their office till acquitted by an oracle at Delphi, or a priest at Olympia. A wise superstition. But, Lysander, the night is not moonless, and the omen is therefore nought."

Lysander shook his head mournfully, and followed his chieftain to the boat, in gloomy silence.

BOOK SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

At noon the next day, not only the vessels in the harbor presented the same appearance of inactivity and desertion which had characterized the preceding evening, but the camp itself seemed forsaken. Pausanias had quitted his ship for the citadel, in which he took up his lodgment when on shore: and most of the officers and sailors of the squandron were dispersed among the taverns and wine-shops for which, even at that day, Byzantium was celebrated.

It was in one of the lowest and most popular of these latter resorts, and in a large and rude chamber, or rather outhouse, separated from the rest of the building, that a number of the Laconian Helots were assembled. Some of these were employed as sailors, others were the military attendants on the Regent and the Spartans who accompanied him.

At the time we speak of, these unhappy beings were in the full excitement of that wild and melancholy gaiety which is almost peculiar to slaves in their hours of recreation, and which reaction of wretchedness modern writers have discovered the indulgence of a native humor. Some of them were drinking deep, wrangling, jesting, laughing in loud discord over their cups. At another table rose the deep voice of a singer, chanting one of those antique airs known but to these degraded sons of the Homeric Achæan, and probably in its origin going beyond the date of the Tale of Troy; a song of gross and rustic buffoonery, but ever and anon charged with some image or thought worthy of that language of the universal Muses.

His companions listened with a rude delight to the rough voice and homely sounds, and now and then interrupted the wassailers at the other tables by cries for silence, which none regarded. Here and there, with intense and fierce anxiety on their faces, small groups were playing at dice; for gambling is the passion of slaves. And many of these men, to whom wealth could bring no comfort, had secretly amassed large hoards at the plunder of Platæa, from which they had sold to the traders of Ægina gold at the price of brass. The appearance of the rioters was startling and melancholy. They were mostly stunted and undersized, as are generally the progeny of the sons of woe; lean and gaunt with early hardship, the spine of the back curved and bowed by habitual degradation; but with the hard-knit sinews and prominent muscles which are produced by labor and the mountain air; and under shaggy and lowering brows sparkled many a fierce, perfidious, and malignant eye; while as mirth, or gaming, or song, aroused smiles in the various groups, the rude features spoke of the passions easily released from the sullen bondage of servitude, and revealed the nature of the animals which thraldom had failed to tame,

Here and there, however, were to be seen forms, unlike the rest, of stately stature, of fair proportions, wearing the divine lineaments of Grecian beauty. From some of these a higher nature spoke out, not in mirth, that last mockery of supreme woe, but in an expression of stern, grave, and disdainful melancholy; others, on the contrary, surpassed the rest in vehemence, clamor, and exuberant extravagance of emotion, as if their nobler physical development only served to entitle them to that base superiority. For health and vigor can make an aristocracy even among Helots. The garments of these merry-makers increased the peculiar effect of their general appearance. The Helots in military excur-

sions naturally relinquished the rough sheepskin dress that characterized their countrymen at home, the serfs of the soil. The sailors had thrown off, for coolness, the leathern jerkins they habitually wore, and, with their bare arms and breasts, looked as if of a race that yet shivered, primitive and unredeemed, on the outskirts of civilization.

Strangely contrasted with their rougher comrades were those who, placed occasionally about the person of the Regent, were indulged with the loose and clean robes of gay colors worn by the Asiatic slaves; and these ever and anon glanced at their finery with an air of conscious triumph. Altogether, it was a sight that might well have appalled, by its solemn lessons of human change, the poet who would have beheld in that embruted flock the descendants of the race over whom Pelops and Atreus, and Menelaus, and Agamemnon the king of men had held their antique sway, and might still more have saddened the philosopher who believed, as Menander has nobly written, "That Nature knows no slaves."

Suddenly, in the midst of the confused and uproarious hubbub, the door opened, and Alcman the Mothon entered the chamber. At this sight the clamor ceased in an instant. The party rose, as by a general impulse, and crowded round the new-comer.

"My friends," said he, regarding them with the same calm and frigid indifference which usually characterized his demeanor, "you do well to make merry while you may, for something tells me it will not last long. We shall return to Lacedæmon. You look black. So, then, is there no delight in the thought of home?"

"*Home!*" muttered one of the Helots, and the word, sounding drearily on his lips, was echoed by many, so that it circled like a groan.

"Yet ye have your children as much as if ye were free," said Alcman.

"And for that reason it pains us to see them play, unaware of the future," said a Helot of better mien than his comrades.

"But do you know," returned the Mothon, gazing on the last speaker steadily, "that for your children there may not be a future fairer than that which your fathers knew?"

"Tush!" exclaimed one of the unhappy men, old before his time, and of an aspect singularly sullen and ferocious. 'Such have been your half-hints and mystic prophecies for years. What good comes of them? Was there ever an oracle for Helots?"

"There was no repute in the oracles even of Apollo," retured Alcman, "till the Apollo-serving Dorians became conquerors. Oracles are the children of victories."

"But there are no victories for us," said the first speaker, mournfully.

"Never, if ye despair," said the Mothon loftily. "What," he added after a pause, looking round at the crowd, "what, do ye not see that hope dawned upon us from the hour when thirty-five thousand of us were admitted as soldiers, ay, and as conquerors, at Platæa? From that moment we knew our strength. Listen to me. At Samos once a thousand slaves—mark me, but a thousand—escaped the yoke—seized on arms, fled to the mountains (we have mountains even in Laconia), descended from time to time to devastate the fields and to harass their ancient lords. By habit they learned war, by desperation they grew indomitable. What became of these slaves? were they cut off? Did they perish by hunger, by the sword, in the dungeon or field? No; these brave men were the founders of Ephesus." *

"But the Samians were not Spartans," mumbled the old Helot.

"As ye will, as ye will," said Alcman, relapsing into his usual coldness. "I wish you never to strike unless ye are prepared to die or conquer."

"Some of us are, said the younger Helot.

"Sacrifice a cock to the Fates, then."

"But why, think you," asked one of the Helots "that we shall be so soon summoned back to Laconia?"

"Because while ye are drinking and idling here—drones that ye are—there is commotion in the Athenian bee-hive yonder. Know that Ariamanes the Persian and Datis the Mede have escaped. The allies, especially the Athenians, are excited and angry; and many of them are already come in a body to Pausanias, whom they accuse of abetting the escape of the fugitives."

"Well?"

"Well, and if Pausanias does not give honey

* Malacus ap. Athen. 6.

in his words—and few flowers grow on his lips—the bees will sting, that is all. A trireme will be despatched to Sparta with complaints. Pausanias will be recalled—perhaps his life endangered."

"Endangered!" echoed several voices.

"Yes. What is that to you—what care you for his danger? He is a Spartan."

"Ay," cried one; "but he has been kind to the Helots.'

"And we have fought by his side," said another.

"And he dressed my wound with his own hand," muttered a third.

"And we have got money under him," growled a fourth.

"And more than all," said Alcman, in a loud voice, "If he lives he will break down the Spartan government. Ye will not let this man die?"

"Never!" exclaimed the whole assembly. Alcman gazed with a kind of calm and strange contempt on the flashing eyes, the fiery gestures of the throng, and then said, coldly,

"So then you would fight for one man?"

"Ay, ay, that would we."

"But not for your own liberties and those of your children unborn?"

There was a dead silence; but the taunt was felt, and its logic was already at work in many of these rugged breasts.

At this moment the door was suddenly thrown open; and a Helot, in the dress worn by the attendants of the Regent, entered, breathless and panting.

"Alcman! the gods be praised you are here. Pausanias commands your presence. Lose not a moment. And you too, comrades, by Demeter, do you mean to spend whole days at your cups? Come to the citidal; ye may be wanted."

This was spoken to such of the Helots, as belonged to the train of Pausanias.

"Wanted—what for?" said one. "Pausanias gives us a holiday while he employs the sleek Egyptians."

"Who that serves Pausanias ever asks that question, or can foresee from one hour to another what he may be required to do?" returned the self-important messenger, with great contempt.

Meanwhile the Mothon, all whose movements were peculiarly silent and rapid, was already on his way to the citaded. The distance was not inconsiderable, but Alcman was swift of foot. Tightening the girdle round his waist, he swung himself, as it were, into a kind of run, which, though not seemingly rapid, cleared the ground with a speed almost rivalling that of the ostrich, from the length of the stride and the extreme regularity of the pace. Such was at that day the method by which messages were despatched from state to state, especially in mountainous countries; and the length of way which was performed, without stopping, by the foot-couriers might startle the best-trained pedestrians in our times. So swiftly, indeed, did the Mothon pursue his course, that just by the citadel he came up with the Grecian captains who, before he joined the Helots, had set off for their audience with Pausanias. There were some fourteen or fifteen of them, and they so filled up the path, which, just there, was not broad, that Alcman was obliged to pause as he came upon their rear.

"And whither so fast, fellow?" said Uliades the Samian, turning round as he heard the strides of the Mothon.

"Please you, master, I am bound to the General."

"Oh, his slave! Is he going to free you?"

"I am already as free as a man who has no city can be."

"Pithy. The Spartan slaves have the dryness of their masters. How, sirrah! do you jostle me?"

"I crave pardon. I only seek to pass."

"Never! to take precedence of a Samian. Keep back."

"I dare not."

"Nay, nay, let him pass," said the young Chian, Antagoras; "he will get scourged if he is too late. Perhaps, like the Persians, Pausanias wears false hair, and wishes the slave to dress it in honor of us."

"Hush!" whispered an Athenian. "Are these taunts prudent?"

Here there suddenly broke forth a loud oath from Uliades, who, lingering a little behind the rest, had laid rough hands on the Mothon, as the latter once more attempted to pass him. With a dexterous and abrupt agility, Alcman had extricated himself from the Samian's grasp, but with a force that swung the captain on his knee. Taking advantage of the position of the

foe, the Mothon darted onward, and threading the rest of the party, disappeared through the neighboring gates of the citadel.

"You saw the insult?" said Uliades between his ground teeth as he recovered himself. "The master shall answer for the slave; and to me, too, who have forty slaves of my own at home!"

"Pooh! think no more of it," said Antagoras gaily; "the poor fellow meant only to save his own hide."

"As if that were of any consequence! my slaves are brought up from the cradle not to know if they have hides or not. You may pinch them by the hour together and they don't feel you. My little ones do it, in rainy weather, to strengthen their fingers. The Gods keep them!"

"An excellent gymnastic invention. But we are now within the citadel. Courage! the Spartan greyhound has long teeth."

Pausanias was striding with hasty steps up and down a long and narrow peristyle or colonnade that surrounded the apartments appropriated to his private use, when Alcman joined him.

"Well, well," cried he, eagerly, as he saw the Mothon, "you have mingled with the common gangs of these worshipful seaman, these new men, these Ionians. Think you they have so far overcome their awe of the Spartan that they would obey the mutinous commands of their officers?"

"Pausanias, the truth must be spoken.—Yes!"

"Ye Gods! one would think each of these wranglers imagined he had a whole Persian army in his boat. Why, I have seen the day when, if in any assembly of Greeks a Spartan entered, the sight of his very hat and walking-staff cast a terror through the whole conclave."

"True, Pausanias; but they suspect that Sparta herself will disown her General."

"Ah! say they so?"

"With one voice."

Pausanias paused a moment in deep and perturbed thought.

"Have they dared yet, think you, to send to Sparta?"

"I hear not; but a trireme is in readiness to sail after your conference with the captains.'

"So, Alcman, it were ruin to my schemes to be recalled—until—until——"

"The hour to join the Persians on the frontier—yes."

"One word more. Have you had occasion to sound the Helots?"

"But half an hour since. They will be true to you. Lift your right hand, and the ground where you stand will bristle with men who fear death even less than the Spartans."

"Their aid were useless here against the whole Grecian fleet; but in the defiles of Laconia, otherwise. I am prepared then for the worst, even recall."

Here a slave crossed from a kind of passage that led from the outer chambers into the peristyle.

"The Grecian captains have arrived to demand audience."

"Bid them wait," cried Pausanias, passionately.

"Hist! Pausanias," whispered the Mothon. "Is it not best to soothe them—to play with them—to cover the lion with the fox's hide?"

The Regent turned with a frown to his foster-brother, as if surprised and irritated by his presumption in advising; and indeed of late, since Pausanias had admitted the son of the Helot into his guilty intrigues, Alcman had assumed a bearing and tone of equality which Pausanias, wrapped in his dark schemes, did not always notice, but at which from time to time he chafed angrily, yet again permitted it, and the custom gained ground; for in guilt conventional distinctions rapidly vanish, and mind speaks freely out to mind. The presence of the slave, however, restrained him, and after a momentary silence his natural acuteness, great when undisturbed by passion or pride, made him sensible of the wisdom of Alcman's counsel.

"Hold!" he said to the slave. "Announce to the Grecian Chiefs that Pausanias will await them forthwith. Begone. Now, Alcman, I will talk over these gentle monitors. Not in vain have I been educated in Sparta; yet if by chance I fail, hold thyself ready to haste to Sparta at a minute's warning. I must forestall the foe. I have gold, gold; and he who employs most of the yellow orators will prevail most with the Ephors. Give me my staff; and tarry in yon chamber to the left."

CHAPTER II.

In a large hall, with a marble fountain in the middle of it, the Greek captains awaited the coming of Pausanias. A low and muttered conversation was carried on amongst them, in small knots and groups, amidst which the voice of Uliades was heard the loudest. Suddenly the hum was hushed, for footsteps were heard without. The thick curtains that at one extreme screened the door-way were drawn aside, and, attended by three of the Spartan knights, amongst whom was Lysander, and by two sooothsayers, who were seldom absent, in war or warlike council, from the side of the Royal Heracleid, Pausanias slowly entered the hall. So majestic, grave, and self-collected were the bearing and aspect of the Spartan general, that the hereditary awe inspired by his race was once more awakened, and the angry crowd saluted him, silent and half abashed. Although the strong passions and the daring arrogance of Pausanias did not allow him the exercise of that enduring, systematic, unsleeping hypocrisy which, in relations with the foreigner, often characterized his countrymen, and which, from its outward dignity and profound craft, exalted the vice into genius; yet trained from earliest childhood in the arts that hide design, that control the countenance, and convey in the fewest words the most ambiguous meanings, the Spartan general could, for a brief period, or for a critical purpose, command all the wiles for which the Greek was nationally famous, and in which Thucydides believed that, of all Greeks, the Spartan was the most skilful adept. And now, as uniting the courtesy of the host with the dignity of the chief, he returned the salute of the offiers, and smiled his gracious welcome, the unwonted affability of his manner took the discontented by surprise, and half propitiated the most indignant in his favor.

"I need not ask you, O Greeks," said he, "why ye have sought me. Ye have learnt the escape of Ariamanes and Datis—a strange and unaccountable mischance."

The captains looked round at each other in silence, till at last every eye rested upon Cimon, whose illustrious birth, as well as his known respect for Sparta, combined with his equally well-known dislike of her chief, seemed to mark him, despite his youth, as the fittest person to be speaker for the rest. Cimon, who understood the mute appeal, and whose courage never failed his ambition, raised his head, and, after a moment's hesitation, replied to the Spartan—

"Pausanias, you guess rightly the cause which leads us to your presence, These prisoners were our noblest; their capture the reward of our common valor, they were generals, moreover, of high skill aud repute. They had become experienced in our Grecian warfare, even by their defeats. Those two men, should Xerxes again invade Greece, are worth more to his service than half the nations whose myriads crossed the Hellespont. But this is not all. The arms of the Barbarians we can encounter undismayed. It is treason at home which can alone appal us."

The was a low murmur among the Ionians at these words. Pausanias, with well-dissembled surprise on his countenance, turned his eyes from Cimon to the murmurers, and from tbem again to Cimon, and repeated:—

"Treason! son of Miltiades; and from whom?"

"Such is the question that we would put to thee, Pausanias—to thee, whose eyes, as leader of our armies, are doubtless vigilant daily and nightly over the interests of Greece."

"I am not blind," returned Pausanias, appearing unconscious of the irony: "but I am not Argus. If thou hast discovered aught that is hidden from me, speak boldly."

"Thou hast made Gongylus, the Eretrian, governor of Byzantium; for what great services we know not. But he has lived much in Persia."

"For that reason, on this the frontier of her domains, he is better enabled to penetrate her designs and counteract her ambition."

"This Gongylus," continued Cimon, "is well known to have much frequented the Persian captives in their confinement."

"In order to learn from them what may yet be the strength of the king. In this he had my commands."

"I question it not. But, Pausanias," continued Cimon, rising his voice, and with energy, "had he also thy commands to leave thy galley last night, and to return to the citadel?"

"He had. What then?"

"And on his return the Persians disappear—a singular chance, truly. But that is not

all. Last night, before he returned to the citadel, Gongylus was perceived, alone, in a retired spot on the outskirts of the city."

"Alone?" echoed Pausanias.

"Alone. If he had companions they were not discerned. This spot was out of the path he should have taken. By this spot, on the soft soil, are the marks of hoofs, and in the thicket close by were found these witnesses," and Cimon drew from his vest a handful of the pearls only worn by the Eastern captives.

"There is something in this," said Xanthippus, "which requires at least examination. May it please you, Pausanias, to summon Gongylus hither?"

A momentary shade passed over the brow of the conspirator, but the eyes of the Greeks were on him; and to refuse were as dangerous as to comply. He turned to one of his Spartans, and ordered him to summon the Eretrian.

"You have spoken well, Xanthippus. This matter must be sifted."

With that, motioning the captains to the seats that were ranged round the walls and before a long table, he cast himself into a large chair at the head of the table, and waited in silent anxiety the entrance of the Eretrian. His whole trust now was in the craft and penetration of his friend. If the courage or the cunning of Gongylus failed him—if but a word betrayed him—Pausanias was lost. He was girt by men who hated him; and he read in the dark, fierce eyes of the Ionians—whose pride he had so often galled, whose revenge he had so carelessly provoked—the certainty of ruin. One hand hidden within the folds of his robe convulsively clinched the flesh, in the stern agony of his suspense. His calm and composed face nevertheless exhibited to the captains no trace of fear.

The draperies were again drawn aside, and Gongylus slowly entered.

Habituated to peril of every kind from his earliest youth, the Eretrian was quick to detect its presence. The sight of the silent Greeks, formally seated round the hall, and watching his steps and countenance with eyes whose jealous and vindictive meaning it required no Œdipus to read, the grave and half-averted brow of Pausanias, and the angry excitement that had prevailed amidst the host at the news of the escape of the Persians—all sufficed to apprise him of the nature of the council to which he had been summoned.

Supporting himself on his staff, and dragging his limbs tardily along, he had leisure to examine, though with apparent indifference, the whole group; and when, with a calm salutation, he arrested his steps at the foot of the table immediately facing Pausanias, he darted one glance at the Spartan so fearless, so bright, so cheering, that Pansanias breathed hard, as if a load were thrown from his breast, and turning easily towards Cimon, said—

"Behold your witness. Which of us shall be questioner, and which judge?"

"That matters but little," returned Cimon. "Before this audience justice must force its way."

"It rests with you, Pausanias," said Xanthippus, to acquaint the governor of Byzantium with the suspicions he has excited."

"Gongylus," said Pausanias, "the captive Barbarians, Ariamanes, and Datis, were placed by me especially under thy vigilance and guard. Thou knowest that, while (for humanity becomes the victor) I ordered thee to vex them by no undue restraints, I nevertheless commanded thee to consider thy life itself answerable for their durance. They have escaped. The captains of Greece demand of thee, as I demanded—by what means—by what connivance? Speak the truth, and deem that in falsehood as well as in treachery, detection is easy, and death certain."

The tone of Pausanias, and his severe look, pleased and re-assured all the Greeks except the wiser Cimon, who, though his suspicions were a little shaken, continued to fix his eyes rather on Pausanias than on the Eretrian.

"Pausanias," replied Gongylus, drawing up his lean frame, as with the dignity of conscious innocence, "that suspicion could fall upon me, I find it difficult to suppose. Raised by thy favor to the command of Byzantium, what have I to gain by treason or neglect? These Persians—I knew them well. I had known them in Susa—known them when I served Darius, being then an exile from Eretria. Ye know, my countrymen, that when Darius invaded Greece I left his court and armies, and sought my native land, to fall or to conquer in its cause. Well, then, I knew these Barbarians. I sought them frequently; partly, it may be, to return to them in their

adversity the courtesies shown me in mine. Ye are Greeks; ye will not condemn me for humanity and gratitude. Partly with another motive. I knew that Ariamanes had the greatest influence over Xerxes. I knew that the great king would at any cost seek to regain the liberty of his friend. I urged upon Ariamanes the wisdom of a peace with the Greeks even on their own terms. I told him that when Xerxes sent to offer the ransom, conditions of peace would await more than sacks of gold. He listened and approved. Did I wrong in this, Pausanias? No; for thou, whose deep sagacity has made thee condescend even to appear half Persian, because thou art all Greek—thou thyself didst sanction my efforts on behalf of Greece."

Pausanias looked with a silent triumph round the conclave, and Xanthippus nodded approval.

"In order to conciliate them, and with too great confidence in their faith, I relaxed by degrees the rigor of their confinement; that was a fault, I own it. Their apartments communicated with a court in which I suffered them to walk at will. But I placed there two sentinels in whom I deemed I could repose all trust—not my own countrymen—not Eretrians—not thy Spartans or Laconians, Pausanias. No: I deemed that if ever the jealousy (a laudable jealousy) of the Greeks should demand an account of my faith and vigilance, my witnesses should be the countrymen of those who have ever the most suspected me. Those sentinels were, the one a Samian, the other a Platæan. These men have betrayed me and Greece. Last night, on returning hither from the vessel, I visited the Persians. They were about to retire to rest, and I quitted them soon, suspecting nothing. This morning they had fled, and with them their abetters, the sentinels. I hastened first to send soldiers in search of them; and, secondly, to inform Pausanias in his galley. If I have erred, I submit me to your punishment. Punish my error, but acquit my honesty."

"And what," said Cimon, abruptly, "led thee far from thy path, between the Heracleid's galley and the citidal, to the fields near the temple of Aphrodite, between the citidal and the bay? Thy color changes. Mark him, Greeks. Quick; thine answer.

The countenance of Gongylus had indeed lost its color and hardihood. The loud tone of Cimon—the effect his confusion produced on the Greeks, some of whom, the Ionians less self-possessed and dignified than the rest, half rose, with fierce gestures and muttered exclamations—served still more to embarrass and intimidate him. He cast a hasty look on Pausanias, who averted his eyes. There was a pause. The Spartan gave himself up for lost; but how much more was his fear increased when Gongylus, casting an imploring gaze upon the Greeks, said hesitatingly—

"Question me no farther. I dare not speak;" and as he spoke he pointed to Pausanias.

"It was the dread of thy resentment, Pausanias," said Cimon coldly, "that withheld his confession. Vouchsafe to re-assure him."

"Eretrain," said Pausanias, striking his clenched hand on the table. "I know not what tale trembles on they lips; but, be it what it may, give it voice, I command thee."

"Thou thyself, thou wert the cause that led me towards the temple of Aphrodite," said Gongylus, in a low voice.

At these words there went forth a general deep-breathed murmur. With one accord every Greek rose to his feet. The Spartan attendants in the rear of Pausanias drew closer to his person; but there was nothing in their faces—yet more dark and vindictive than those of the other Greeks—that promised protection. Pausanias alone remained seated and unmoved. His imminent danger gave him back all his valor, all his pride, all his passionate and profound disdain. With unbleached cheek, with haughty eyes, he met the gaze of the assembly; and then waving his hand as if that gesture sufficed to restrain and awe them, he said—

"In the name of all Greece, whose chief I yet am, whose protector I have once been, I command ye to resume your seats, and listen to the Eretrian. Spartans, fall back. Governor of Byzantium, pursue your tale."

"Yes, Pausanias," resumed Gongylus, "you alone were the cause that drew me from my rest. I would fain be silent, but——"

"Say on," cried Pausanias fiercely, and measuring the space between himself and Gongylus, in doubt whether the Eretrian's head were within reach of his scimitar; so at least Gongylus interpreted that freezing look

of despair and vengeance, and he drew back some paces. "I place myself, O Greeks, under your protection; it is dangerous to reveal the errors of the great. Know that, as Governor of Byzantium, many things ye wot not of reach my ears. Hence, I guard against dangers while ye sleep. Learn, then, that Pausanias is not without the weakness of his ancestor, Alcides; he loves a maiden—a Byzantine—Cleonice, the daughter of Diagoras."

This unexpected announcement, made in so grave a tone, provoked a smile amongst the gay Ionians; but an exclamation of jealous anger broke from Antagoras, and a blush partly of wounded pride, partly of warlike shame, crimsoned the swarthy cheek of Pausanias. Cimon, who was by no means free from the joyous infirmities of youth, relaxed his severe brow, and said, after a short pause—

"Is it, then, among the grave duties of the Governor of Byzantium to watch over the fair Cleonice, or to aid the suit of her illustrious lover?"

"Not so," answered Gongylus; "but the life of the Grecian general is dear, at least, to the grateful Governor of Byzantium. Greeks, ye know that amongst you Pausanias has many foes. Returning last night from his presence, and passing through the thicket, I overhead voices at hand. I caught the name of Pausanias. 'The Spartan,' said one voice, 'nightly visits the house of Diagoras. He goes usually alone. From the height near the temple we can watch well, for the night is clear; if he goes alone, we can intercept his way on his return.' 'To the height!' cried the other. I thought to distingush the voices, but the trees hid the speakers. I followed the footsteps towards the temple, for it behoved me to learn who thus menaced the chief of Greece. But ye know that the wood reaches even to the sacred building, and the steps gained the temple before I could recognize the men. I concealed myself, as I thought, to watch; but it seems that I was perceived, for he who saw me, and now accuses, was doubtless one of the assassins. Happy I, if the sight of a witness scared him from the crime. Either fearing detection, or aware that their intent that night was frustrated—for Pausanias, visiting Cleonice earlier than his wont, had already resought his galley—the men retreated as they came, unseen, not unheard. I caught their receding steps through the brushwood. Greeks, I have said. Who is my accuser? In him behold the would-be murderer of Pausanias!"

"Liar!" cried an indignant and loud voice amongst the captains, and Antagoras stood forth from the circle.

"It is I who saw thee. Darest thou accuse Antagoras of Chios?"

"What at that hour brought Antagoras of Chios to the temple of Aphrodite?" retorted Gongylus.

The eyes of the Greeks turned toward the young captain, and there was confusion on his face. But recovering himself quickly, the Chian answered, "Why should I blush to own it? Aphrodite is no dishonorable deity to the men of the Ionian Isles. I sought the temple at that hour, as is our wont, to make my offering, and record my prayer."

"Certainly," said Cimon. "We must own that Aphrodite is powerful at Byzantium. Who can acquit Pausanias and blame Antagoras?"

"Pardon me—one question," said Gongylus. "Is not the female heart which Antagoras would beseech the goddess to soften towards him that of the Cleonice of whom we spoke? See, he denies it not. Greeks, the Chians are warm lovers, and warm lovers are revengeful rivals."

This artful speech had its instantaneous effect amongst the younger and more unthinking loiterers. Those who at once would have disbelieved the imputed guilt of Antagoras upon motives merely political, inclined to a suggestion that ascribed it to the jealousy of a lover. And his character, ardent and fiery, rendered the suspicion yet more plausible. Meanwhile the minds of the audience had been craftily drawn from the grave and main object of the meeting—the flight of the Persians—and a lighter and livelier curiosity had supplanted the eager and dark resentment which had hitherto animated the circle. Pausanias, with the subtle genius that belonged to him, hastened to seize advantage of this momentary diversion in his favor, and before the Chian could recover his consternation, both at the charge and the evident effect it had produced upon a part of the assembly, the Spartan stretched his hand, and spake.—

"Greeks, Pausanias listens to no tale of danger to himself. Willingly he believes that

Gongylus either misinterpreted the intent of some jealous and heated threats, or that the words he overheard were not uttered by Antagoras. Possible is it, too, that others may have sought the temple with less gentle desires than our Chian ally. Let this pass. Unworthy such matters of the councils of bearded men; too much reference has been made to those follies which our idleness has given birth to. Let no fair Briseis renew strife amongst chiefs and soldiers. Excuse not thyself, Antagoras; we dismiss all charge against thee. On the other hand, Gongylus will doubtless seem to you to have accounted for his appearance near the precincts of the temple. And it is but a coincidence, natural enough, that the Persian prisoners should have chosen, later in the night, the same spot for the steeds to await them. The thickness of the wood round the temple, and the direction of the place towards the east, points out the neighborhood as the very one in which the fugitives would appoint the horses. Waste no further time, but provide at once for the pursuit. To you, Cimon, be this care confided. Already have I despatched fifty light-armed men on fleet Thessalian steeds. You, Cimon, increase the number of the pursuers. The prisoners may be yet recaptured. Doth aught else remain worthy of our ears? If so, speak; if not, depart."

"Pausanias," said Antagoras, firmly, "let Gongylus retract, or not, his charge against me, I retain mine against Gongylus. Wholly false is it that in word or deed I plotted violence against thee, though of much—not as Cleonice's lover, but as Grecian captain—I have good reason to complain. Wholly false is it that I had a comrade. I was alone. And coming out from the temple, where I had hung my chaplet, I perceived Gongylus clearly under the starlit skies. He stood in listening attitude close by the sacred myrtle grove. I hastened towards him, but methinks he saw me not; he turned slowly, penetrated the wood, and vanished. I gained the spot on the soft sward which the drooping boughs make ever humid. I saw the print of hoofs. Within the thicket I found the pearls that Cimon has displayed to you. Clear then, is it that this man lies—clear that the Persians must have fled already—although Gongylus declares that on his return to the citadel he visited them in their prison. Explain this, Eretrian?"

"He who would speak false witness," answered Gongylus, with a firmness equal to the Chian's, "can find pearls at whatsoever hour he pleases. Greeks, this man presses me to renew the charge which Pausanias generously sought to stifle. I have said. And I, Governor of Byzantium, call on the Council of the Grecian Leaders to maintain my authority, and protect their own Chief."

Then arose a vexed and perturbed murmur, most of the Ionians siding with Antagoras, such of the allies as yet clung to the Dorian ascendancy grouping round Gongylus.

The persistence of Antagoras had made the dilemma of no slight embarrassment to Pausanias. Something lofty in his original nature urged him to shrink from supporting Gongylus in an accusation which he believed untrue. On the other hand, he could not abandon his accomplice in an effort, as dangerous as it was crafty, to conceal their common guilt.

"Son of Miltiades," he said after a brief pause, in which his dexterous resolution was formed, "I invoke your aid to appease a contest in which I foresee no result but that of schism amongst ourselves. Antagoras has no witness to support his tale, Gongylus none to support his own. Who shall decide between conflicting testimonies which rest but on the lips of accuser and accused? Hereafter, if the matter be deemed sufficiently grave, let us refer the decision to the oracle that never errs. Time and chance meanwhile may favor us in clearing up the darkness we cannot now penetrate. For you, Governor of Byzantium, it behoves me to say that the escape of prisoners entrusted to your charge justifies vigilance if not suspicion. We shall consult at our leisure whether or not that course suffices to remove you from the government of Byzantium. Heralds, advance; our council is dissolved."

With these words Pausanias rose, and the majesty of his bearing, with the unwonted temper and conciliation of his language, so came in aid of his high office that no man ventured a dissentient murmur.

The conclave broke up, and not till its members had gained the outer air did any signs of suspicion or dissatisfaction evince themselves; but then, gathered in groups, the Ionians with especial jealousy discussed what had passed, and with their native shrewdness ascribed the moderation of Pausanias to his desire to screen

Gongylus and avoid further inquisition into the flight of the prisoners. The discontented looked round for Cimon, but the young Athenian had hastily retired from the throng, and, after issuing orders to pursue the fugitives, sought Aristides in the house near the quay in which he lodged.

Cimon related to his friend what had passed at the meeting, and terminating his recital, said—

"Thou shouldst have been with us. With thee we might have ventured more."

"And if so," returned the wise Athenian with a smile, "ye would have prospered less. Precisely because I would not commit our country to the suspicion of fomenting intrigues and mutiny to her own advantage, did I abstain from the assembly, well aware that Pausanias would bring his minion harmless from the unsupported accusation of Antagoras. Thou hast acted with cool judgment, Cimon. The Spartan is weaving the webs of the Parcæ for his own feet. Leave him to weave on, undisturbed. The hour in which Athens shall assume the sovereignty of the seas is drawing near. Let it come, like Jove's thunder, in a calm sky."

CHAPTER III.

PAUSANIAS did not that night quit the city. After the meeting, he held a private conference with the Spartan Equals, whom custom and the government assigned, in appearance as his attendants, in reality as witnesses if not spies of his conduct. Though every pure Spartan, as compared with the subject Laconian population, was noble, the republic acknowledged two main distinctions in class, the higher, entitled Equals, a word which we might not inaptly and more intelligibly render Peers; the lower, inferiors. These distinctions, though hereditary, were not immutable. The peer could be degraded, the inferior could become a peer. To the royal person in war three peers were allotted. Those assigned to Pausanias, of the tribe called the Hylleans, were naturally of a rank and influence that constrained him to treat them with a certain deference, which perpetually chafed his pride and confirmed his discontent; for these three men were precisely of the mould which at heart he most despised. Polydorus, the first in rank—for, like Pausanias, he boasted his descent from Hercules—was the personification of the rudeness and bigotry of a Spartan who had never before stirred from his rocky home, and who disdained all that he could not comprehend. Gelon, the second, passed for a very wise man, for he seldom spoke but in monosyllables; yet, probably, his words were as numerous as his ideas. Cleomenes, the third, was as distastful to the Regent from his merits as the others from their deficiencies. He had risen from the grade of the Inferiors by his valour; blunt, homely, frank, sincere, he never disguised his displeasure at the manner of Pausanias, though, a true Spartan in discipline, he never transgressed the respect which his chief commanded in time of war.

Pausanias knew that these officers were in correspondence with Sparta, and he now exerted all his powers to remove from their minds any suspicion which the disappearance of the prisoners might have left in them.

In this interview he displayed all those great natural powers which, rightly trained and guided, might have made him not less great in council than in war. With masterly precision he enlarged on the growing ambition of Athens, on the disposition in her favor evinced by all the Ionian confederates. "Hitherto," he said truly, "Sparta has uniformly held rank as the first state of Greece; the leadership of the Greeks belongs to us by birth and renown. But see you not that the war is now shifting from land to sea? Sea is not our element; it is that of Athens, of all the Ionian race. If this continue we lose our ascendancy, and Athens becomes the sovereign of Hellas. Beneath the calm of Aristides I detect his deep design. In vain Cimon affects the manner of the Spartan; at heart he is Athenian. This charge against Gongylus is aimed at me. Grant that the plot which it conceals, succeed· grant that Sparta share the affected suspicions of the Ionians, and recall me from Byzantium; deem you that there lives one Spartan who could delay for a day the supremacy of Athens? Nought save the respect the Dorian Greeks at least attach to the General at Platæa could restrain the secret ambition of the city of the demagogues. Deem not that I have

been as rash and vain as some hold me for the stern visage I have shown to the Ionians. Trust me that it was necessary to awe them. with a view to maintain our majesty.

"For Sparta to preserve her ascendancy, two things are needful: first, to continue the war by land; secondly, to disgust the Ionians with their sojourn here, send them with their ships to their own havens, and so leave Hellas under the sole guardianship, of ourselves and our Peloponnesian allies. Therefore I say, bear with me in this double design; chide me not if my haughty manner disperse these subtle Ionians. If I bore with them to-day it was less from respect than, shall I say it, my fear lest you should misinterpret me. Beware how you detail to Sparta whatever might rouse the jealousy of her government. Trust to me, and I will extend the dominion of Sparta till it grasp the whole Greece. We will depose everywhere the revolutionary Demos, and establish our own oligarchies in every Grecian state. We will Laconize all Hellas."

Much of what Pausanias said was wise and profound. Such statesmanship, narrow and congenia., but vigorous and crafty, Sparta taught in later years to her alert politicans. And we have already seen that, despite the dazzling prospects of Oriental dominion, he as yet had separated himself rather from the laws than the interests of Sparta, and still incorporated his own ambition with the extension of the sovereignty of his country over the rest of Greece.

But the peers heard him in dull and gloomy silence; and, not till he had paused and thrice asked for a reply, did Polydorus speak.

"You would increase the dominion of Sparta, Pausanias. Increase of dominion is waste of life and treasure. We have few men, little gold; Sparta is content to hold her own."

"Good," said Gelon, with impassive countenance. "What care we who leads the Greeks into blows? the fewer blows the better. Brave men fight if they must, wise men never fight if they can help it."

"And such is your counsel, Cleomenes?" asked Pausanias, with a quivering lip.

"Not from the same reasons," answered the nobler and more generous Spartan. "I presume not to question your motives, Pausanias. I leave you to explain them to the Ephors and tne Gerusia. But since you press me, this I say. First, all the Greeks, Ionian as well as Dorian, fought equally against the Mede, and from the commander of the Greeks all should receive fellowship and courtesy. Secondly, I say if Athens is better fitted than Sparta for the maritime ascendancy, let Athens rule, so that Hellas be saved from the Mede. Thirdly, O Pausanias, I pray that Sparta may rest satisfied with her own institutions, and not disturb the peace of Greece by forcing them upon other States and thereby enslaving Hellas. What more could the Persian do? Finally, my advice is to suspend Gongylus from his office; to conciliate the Ionians; to remain as a Grecian armament firm and united, and so procure, on better terms, peace with Persia. And then let each State retire within itself, and none aspire to rule the other. A thousand free cities are better guard against the Barbarian than a single State made up of republics overthrown and resting its strength upon hearts enslaved."

"Do you too," said Pausanias, gnawing his nether lip, "do you too, Polydorus, you too, Gelon, agree with Cleomenes, that, if Athens is better fitted than Sparta for the soverignty of the seas, we should yield to that restless rival so perilous a power?"

"Ships cost gold," said Polydorous. "Spartans have none to spare. Mariners require skilful captains; Spartans know nothing of the sea."

"Moreover," quoth Gelon, "the ocean is a terrible element. What can valor do against a storm? We may lose more men by adverse weather than a century can repair. Let who will have the seas. Sparta has her rocks and defiles."

"Men and peers," said Pausanias, ill repressing his scorn, "ye little dream what arms ye place in the hands of the Athenians. I have done. Take only this prophecy. You are now the head of Greece. You surrender your sceptre to Athens, and become a second-rate power."

"Never second-rate when Greece shall demand armed men," said Cleomenes proudly.

"Armed men, armed men!" cried the more profound Pausanias. "Do you suppose that commerce—that trade—that maritime energy—that fleets which ransack the shores of the world, will not obtain a power greater

than mere brute-like valor? But as ye will, as ye will."

"As we speak our forefathers thought," said Gelon.

"And, Pausanias," said Cleomenes gravely, "as we speak, so think the Ephors."

Pausanias fixed his dark eye on Cleomenes, and, after a brief pause, saluted the Equals and withdrew. "Sparta," he muttered as he regained his chamber, "Sparta, thou refusest to be great; but greatness is necessary to thy son. Ah, their iron laws would constrain my soul! but it shall wear them as a warrior wears his armor and adapts it to his body. Thou shalt be queen of all Hellas despite thyself, thine Ephors, and thy laws. Then only will I forgive thee."

CHAPTER IV.

DIAGORAS was sitting outside his door and giving various instructions to the slaves employed on his farm, when, through an arcade thickly covered with the vine, the light form of Antagoras came slowly in sight.

"Hail to thee, Diagoras," said the Chian, "thou art the only wise man I meet with. Thou art tranquil while all else are disturbed; and, worshipping the great Mother, thou carest nought, methinks, for the Persian who invades, or the Spartain who professes to defend."

"Tut," said Diagoras, in a whisper, "thou knowest the contrary: thou knowest that if the Persian comes I am ruined; and, by the gods, I am on a bed of thorns as long as the Spartan stays."

"Dismiss thy slaves," exclaimed Antagoras, in the same undertone; "I would speak with thee on grave matters that concern us both."

After hastily finishing his instructions and dismissing his slaves, Diagoras turned to the impatient Chian, and said:

"Now, young warrior, I am all ears for thy speech."

"Truly," said Antagoras, "if thou wert aware of what I am about to utter, thou wouldst not have postponed consideration for thy daughter to thy care for a few jars of beggarly olives."

"Hem!" said Diagoras, peevishly. "Olives are not to be despised; oil to the limbs makes them supple; to the stomach it gives gladness. Oil, moreover, bringeth money when sold. But a daughter is the plague of a man's life. First, one has to keep away lovers; and next to find a husband; and when all is done, one has to put one's hand in one's chest, and pay a tall fellow like thee for robbing one of one's own child. That custom of dowries is abominable. In the good old times a bridegroom, as was meet and proper, paid for his bride; now we poor fathers pay him for taking her. Well, well, never bite thy forefinger, and curl up thy brows. What thou hast to say, say."

"Diagoras, I know that thy heart is better than thy speech, and that, much as thou covetest money, thou lovest thy child more. Know, then, that Pausanias—a curse light on him!—brings shame upon Cleonice. Know that already her name hath grown the talk of the camp. Know that his visit to her the night before last was proclaimed in the council of the Captains as a theme for jest and rude laughter. By the head of Zeus, how thinkest thou to profit by the stealthy wooings of this black-browed Spartan? Knowest thou not that his laws forbid him to marry Cleonice? Wouldst thou have him dishonor her? Speak out to him as thou speakest to men, and tell him that the maidens of Byzantium are not in the control of the General of the Greeks."

"Youth, youth," cried Diagoras, greatly agitated, "wouldst thou bring my gray hairs to a bloody grave? wouldst thou see my daughter reft from me by force—and——"

"How darest thou speak thus, old man?" interrupted the indignant Chian. "If Pausanias wronged a virgin, all Hellas would rise against him."

"Yes, but not till the ill were done, till my throat were cut, and my child dishonored. Listen. At first indeed, when, as ill-luck would have it, Pausanias, lodging a few days under my roof, saw and admired Cleonice, I did venture to remonstrate, and how think you he took it? 'Never,' quoth he, with his stern quivering lip, 'never did conquest forego its best right to the smiles of beauty. The legends of Hercules, my ancestor, tell thee that to him who labors for men, the gods grant the love of women. Fear not that I should wrong thy daughter—to woo her is not to wrong. But close thy door on me; immure

Cleonice from my sight; and nor armed slaves, nor bolts, nor bars shall keep love from the loved one.' Therewith he turned on his heel and left me. But the next day came a Lydian in his train, with a goodly pannier of rich stuffs and a short Spartan sword. On the pannier was written '*Friendship*,' on the sword '*Wrath*,' and Alcman gave me a scrap of parchment, whereon, with the cursed brief wit of a Spartan, was inscribed '*Choose!*' Who could doubt which to take? who, by the Gods, would prefer three inches of Spartan iron in his stomach to a basketful of rich stuffs for his shoulders? Wherefore, from that hour, Pausanias comes as he lists. But Cleonice humors him not, let tongues wag as they may. Easier to take three cities than that child's heart."

"Is it so indeed?" exclaimed the Chian, joyfully; "Cleonice loves him not?"

"Laughs at him to his beard: that is, would laugh if he wore one."

"O Diagoras!" cried Antagoras, "hear me, hear me. I need not remind thee that our families are united by the hospitable ties; that amongst thy treasures thou wilt find the gifts of my ancestors for five generations; that when, a year since, my affairs brought me to Byzantium, I came to thee with the symbols of my right to claim thy hospitable cares. On leaving thee we broke the sacred die. I have one half, thou the other. In that visit I saw and loved Cleonice. Fain would I have told my love, but then my father lived, and I feared lest he should oppose my suit; therefore, as became me, I was silent. On my return home, my fears were confirmed; my father desired that I, a Chian, should wed a Chian. Since I have been with the fleet, news has reached me that the urn holds my father's ashes." Here the young Chian paused. "Alas, alas!" he murmured, smiting his breast, "and I was not at hand to fix over thy doors the sacred branch, to give thee the parting kiss, and receive into my lips thy latest breath. May Hermes, O father, have led thee to pleasant groves!"

Diagoras, who had listened attentively to the young Chian, was touched by his grief, and said pityingly:

"I know thou art a good son, and thy father was a worthy man, though harsh. It is a comfort to think that all does not die with the dead. His money at least survives him."

"But," resumed Antagoras, not heeding this consolation—"but now I am free: and ere this, so soon as my mourning garment had been lain aside, I had asked thee to bless me with Cleonice, but that I feared her love was gone—gone to the haughty Spartan. Thou reassurest me; and in so doing, thou confirmest the fair omens with which Aphrodite has received my offerings. Therefore, I speak out. No dowry ask I with Cleonice, save such, more in name than amount, as may distinguish the wife from the concubine, and assure her an honored place amongst my kinsmen. Thou knowest I am rich; thou knowest that my birth dates from the oldest citizens of Chios. Give me thy child, and deliver her thyself at once from the Spartan's power. Once mine, all the fleets of Hellas are her protection, and our marriage torches are the swords of a Grecian army. O Diagoras, I clasp thy knees; put thy right hand in mine. Give me thy child as wife!"

The Byzantine was strongly affected. The suitor was one who in birth and possessions, was all that he could desire for his daughter; and at Byzantium there did not exist that feeling against intermarriages with the foreigner which prevailed in towns more purely Greek, though in many of them, too, that antique prejudice had worn away. On the other hand, by transferring to Antagoras his anxious charge, he felt that he should take the best course to preserve it untarnished from the fierce love of Pausanias, and there was truth in the Chian's suggestion. The daughter of a Byzantine might be unprotected; the wife of an Ionian captain was safe, even from the power of Pausanias. As these reflections occurred to him, he placed his right hand in the Chian's, and said:

"Be it as thou wilt; I consent to betroth thee to Cleonice. Follow me; thou art free to woo her."

So saying, he rose, and, as if in fear of his own second thoughts, he traversed the hall with hasty strides to the interior of the mansion. He ascended a flight of steps, and, drawing aside a curtain suspended between two columns, Antagoras, who followed timidly behind, beheld Cleonice.

As was the wont in the domestic life of all Grecian states, her handmaids were around the noble virgin. Two were engaged on em-

broidery, one in spinning, a fourth was reading aloud to Cleonice, and that at least was a rare diversion to women, for few had the education of the fair Byzantine. Cleonice herself was half reclined upon a bench inlaid with ivory and covered with cushions; before her stood a small triped table on which she leant the arm, the hand of which supported her cheek, and she seemed listening to the lecture of the slave with earnest and absorbed attention, so earnest, so absorbed, that she did not for some moments perceive the entrance of Diagoras and the Chian.

"Child," said the former—and Cleonice started to her feet, and stood modestly before her father, her eyes downcast, her arms crossed upon her bosom—"child, I bid thee welcome my guest-friend, Antagoras of Chios. Slaves, ye may withdraw."

Cleonice bowed her head; and an unquiet, anxious change came over her countenance.

As soon as the slaves were gone, Diagoras resumed—

"Daughter, I present to thee a suitor for thy hand; receive him as I have done, and he shall have my leave to carve thy name on every tree in the garden, with the lover's epithet of 'Beautiful' attached to it. Antagoras, look up, then, and speak for thyself."

But Antagoras was silent; and a fear unknown to his frank hardy nature came over him. With an arch smile, Diagoras, deeming his presence no longer necessary or expedient, lifted the curtain, and lover and maid were left alone.

Then, with an effort, and still with hesitating accents, the Chian spoke—

"Fair virgin—not in the groves of Byzantium will thy name be first written by the hand of Antagoras. In my native Chios the myrtle trees are already eloquent of thee. Since I first saw thee, I loved. Maiden, wilt thou be my wife?"

Thrice moved the lips of Cleonice, and thrice her voice seemed to fail her. At length she said—"Chian, thou art a stranger, and the laws of the Grecian cities dishonor the stranger whom the free citizen stoops to marry."

"Nay," cried Antagoras, "such cruel laws are obsolete in Chios. Nature and custom, and love's almighty goddess, long since have set them aside. Fear not, the haughtiest matron of my native state will not be more honored than the Byzantine bride of Antagoras."

"Is it in Sparta only that such laws exist?" said Cleonice, half unconsciously, and to the sigh with which she spoke a deep blush succeeded.

"Sparta!" exclaimed Antagoras, with a fierce and jealous pang—"Ah, are thy thoughts then upon the son of Sparta? Were Pausanias a Chian, wouldst thou turn from him scornfully as thou now dost from me?"

"Not scornfully, Antagoras," answered Cleonice (who had indeed averted her face at his reproachful question; but now turned it full upon him, with an expression of sad and pathetic sweetness), "not scornfully do I turn from thee, though with pain; for what worthier homage canst thou render to woman than honorable love? Gratefully do I hearken to the suit that comes from thee; but gratitude is not the return thou wouldst ask, Antagoras. My hand is my father's; my heart, alas, is mine. Thou mayst claim from him the one; the other, neither he can give nor thou receive."

"Say not so Cleonice," cried the Chian; "say not, that thou canst not love me, if so I am to interpret thy words. Love brings love with the young. How canst thou yet know thine own heart? Tarry till thou hast listened to mine. As the fire on the altar spreads from offering to offering, so spreads love; its flame envelops all that are near to it. Thy heart will catch the heavenly spark from mine."

"Chian," said Cleonice, gently withdrawing the hand that he sought to clasp, "when as my father's guest friend thou wert a sojourner within these walls, oft have I heard thee speak, and all thy words spoke the thoughts of a noble soul. Were it otherwise, not thus would I now address thee. Didst thou love gold, and wooed in me but the child of the rich Diagoras, or wert thou one of those who would treat for a wife as a trader for a slave, invoking Herè, but disdaining Aphrodite, I should bow my head to my doom. But thou, Antagoras, askest love for love; this I cannot give thee. Spare me, O generous Chian. Let not my father enforce his right to my obedience."

"Answer me but one question," interrupted Antagoras in a low voice, though with compressed lips: "Dost thou then love another?"

The blood mounted to the virgin's cheeks,

it suffused her brow, her neck, with burning blushes, and then receding, left her face colorless as a statue. Then with tones low and constrained as his own, she pressed her hand on her heart, and replied, "Thou sayest it· I love another."

And that other is Pausanias? Alas, thy silence, thy trembling, answer me."

Antagoras groaned aloud and covered his face with his hands; but after a short pause, he exclaimed with great emotion, "No, no—say not that thou lovest Pausanias; say not that Aphrodite hath so accurst thee: for to love Pausanias is to love dishonor."

"Hold, Chian! Not so: for my love has no hope. Our hearts are not our own, but our actions are."

Antagoras gazed on her with suspense and awe; for as she spoke her slight form dilated, her lip curled, her cheek glowed again, but with the blush less of love than of pride. In her countenance, her attitude, there was something divine and holy, such as would have beseemed a priestess of Diana.

"Yes," she resumed, raising her eyes, and with a still and mournful sweetness in her upraised features. "What I love is not Pausanias, it is the glory of which he is the symbol, it is the Greece of which he has been the Saviour. Let him depart as soon as he must—let these eyes behold him no more; still there exists for me all that exists now—a name, a renown, a dream. Never for me may the nuptial hymn resound, or the marriage torch be illumined. O goddess of the silver bow, O chaste and venerable Artemis! receive, protect thy servant; and ye, O funeral gods, lead me soon, lead the virgin unreluctant to the shades."

A superstitious fear, a dread as if his earthly love would violate something sacred, chilled the ardor of the young Chian; and for several moments both were silent.

At length, Antagoras, kissing the hem of her robe, said—

"Maiden of Byzantium—like thee, then, I will love, though without hope. I will not, I dare not, profane thy presence by prayers which pain thee, and seem to me, having heard thee, almost guilty, as if proffered to some nymph circling in choral dance the moonlit mountain-tops of Delos. But ere I depart, and tell thy father that my suit is over, O place at least thy right hand in mine, and swear to me, not the bride's vow of faith and truth, but that vow which a virgin sister may pledge to a brother, mindful to protect and to avenge her. Swear to me, that if this haughty Spartan, contemning alike men, laws, and the household gods, should seek to constrain thy purity to his will; if thou shouldst have cause to tremble at power and force; and fierce desire should demand what gentle love would but reverently implore—then, Cleonice, seeing how little thy father can defend thee, wilt thou remember Antagoras, and through him, summon around thee all the majesty of Hellas? Grant me but this prayer, and I leave thee, if in sorrow, yet not with terror."

"Generous and noble Chian," returned Cleonice as her tears fell upon the hand he extended to her—"why, why do I so ill repay thee? Thy love is indeed that which ennobles the heart that yields it, and her who shall one day recompense thee for the loss of me. Fear not the power of Pausanias: dream not that I shall need a defender, while above us reign the gods, and below us lies the grave. Yet, to appease thee, take my right hand, and hear my oath. If the hour comes when I have need of man's honor against man's wrong, I will call on Antagoras as a brother."

Their hands closed in each other; and not trusting himself to speech, Antagoras turned away his face, and left the room.

CHAPTER V.

For some days, an appearance at least of harmony was restored to the contending factions in the Byzantine camp.

Pausanias did not dismiss Gongylus from the government of the city; but he sent one by one for the more important of the Ionian complainants, listened to their grievances, and promised redress. He adopted a more popular and gracious demeanor, and seemed, with a noble grace, to submit to the policy of conciliating the allies.

But discontent arose from causes beyond his power, had he genuinely exerted it, to remove. For it was a discontent that lay in the hostility of race to race. Though the Spartan Equals had preached courtesy to the Ionians,

the ordinary manner of the Spartan warriors was invariably offensive to the vain and susceptible confederates of a more polished race. A Spartan, wherever he might be placed, unconsciously assumed superiority. The levity of an Ionion was ever displeasing to him. Out of the actual battle-field, they could have no topics in common, none which did not provoke irritation and dispute. On the other hand, most of the Ionians could ill conceal their disaffection, mingled with something of just contempt at the notorious and confessed incapacity of the Spartans for maritime affairs, while a Spartan was yet the commander of the fleet. And many of them, wearied with inaction, and anxious to return home, were willing to seize any reasonable pretext for desertion. In this last motive lay the real strength and safety of Pausanias. And to this end his previous policy of arrogance was not so idle as it had seemed to the Greeks, and appears still in the page of history.

For a Spartan really anxious to preserve the pre-eminence of his country, and to prevent the sceptre of the seas passing to Athens, could have devised no plan of action more sagacious and profound than one which would disperse the Ionians, and the Athenians themselves, and reduce the operations of the Grecian force to that land warfare in which the Spartan pre-eminence was equally indisputable and undisputed. And still Pausanias, even in his change of manner, plotted and intrigued and hoped for this end. Could he once sever from the encampment the Athenians and the Ionian allies, and yet remain with his own force at Byzantium until the Persian army could collect on the Phrygian frontier, the way seemed clear to his ambition. Under ordinary circumstances, in this object he might have succeeded. But it chanced that all his schemes were met with invincible mistrust by those in whose interest they were conceived, and on whose co-operation they depended for success. The means adopted by Pausanias in pursuit of his policy were too distasteful to the national prejudices of the Spartan government to enable him to elicit from the national ambition of that government sufficient sympathy with the object of it. The more he felf himself uncomprehended and mistrusted by his countrymen, the more personal became the character, and the more unscrupulous the course, of his ambition. Unhappily for Pausanias moreover, the circumstances which chafed his pride also thwarted the satisfaction of his affections; and his criminal ambition was stimulated by that less guilty passion which shared with it the mastery of a singularly turbulent and impetuous soul.

Not his the love of sleek, gallant, and wanton youth; it was the love of a man in his mature years, but of a man to whom love till then had been unknown. In that large and dark and stormy nature all passions once admitted took the growth of Titans. He loved as those long lonely at heart alone can love; he loved as love the unhappy when the unfamiliar bliss of the sweet human emotion descends like dew upon the desert. To him Cleonice was a creature wholly out of the range of experience. Differing in every shade of her versatile humor from the only women he had known, the simple, sturdy, uneducated maids and matrons of Sparta, her softness enthralled him, her anger awed. In his dreams of future power, of an absolute throne and unlimited dominion, Pausanias beheld the fair Byzantine, crowned by his side. Fiercely as he loved, and little as the *sentiment* of love mingled with his *passion*, he yet thought not to dishonor a victim, but to elevate a bride. What though the laws of Sparta were against such nuptials, was not the hour approaching when these laws should be trampled under his armed heel? Since the contract with the Persians, which Gongylus assured him Xerxes would joyously and promptly fulfil, Pausanians already felt, in a soul whose arrogance arose from the consciousness of powers that had not yet found their field, as if he he were not the subject of Sparta, but her lord and king.

In his interviews with Cleonice, his language took a tone of promise and of hope that at times lulled her fears, and communicated its sanguine colorings of the future to her own dreams. With the elasticity of youth, her spirits rose from the solemn despondency with which she had replied to the reproaches of Antagoras. For though Pausanias spoke not openly of his schemes, though his words were mysterious, and his replies to her questions ambiguous, and equivocal, still it seemed to her, seeing in him the hero of all Hellas, so natural that he could make the laws of Sparta

yield to the weight of his authority, or relax in homage to his renown, that she indulged the belief that his influence would set aside the iron customs of his country. Was it too extravagant a reward to the conqueror of the Mede to suffer him to select at least the partner of his hearth? No, hope was not dead in that young breast. Still might she be the brides of him whose glory had dazzled her noble and sensitive nature, till the faults that darkened it were lost in the blaze. Thus insensibly to herself her tones became softer to her stern lover, and her heart betrayed itself more in her gentle looks.

Yet again were there times when doubt and alarm returned with more than their earlier force—times when, wrapt in his lurid and absorbing ambition, Pausanias escaped from his usual suppressed reserve—times when she recalled that night in which she had witnessed his interview with the strangers of the East, and had trembled lest the altar should be kindled upon the ruins of his fame. For Cleonice, was wholly, ardently, sublimely Greek, filled in each crevice of her soul with its lovely poetry, its beautiful superstition, its heroic freedom. As Greek, she had loved Pausanias, seeing in him the lofty incarnation of Greece itself. The descendant of the demigod, the champion of Platæa, the saviour of Hellas—theme for song till song should be no more—these attributes were what she beheld and loved; and not to have reigned by his side over a world would she have welcomed one object of that evil ambition which renounced the loyalty of a Greek for the supremacy of a king.

Meanwhile, though Antagoras had, with no mean degree of generosity, relinquished his suit to Cleonice, he detected with a jealous vigilance the continued visits of Pausanias, and burned with increasing hatred against his favored and powerful rival. Though, in common with all the Greeks out of the Peloponnesus, he was very imperfectly acquainted with the Spartan constitution, he could not be blinded, like Cleonice, into the belief that a law so fundamental in Sparta, and so general in all the primitive States of Greece, as that which forbade intermarriage with a foreigner, could be cancelled for the Regent of Sparta, and in favor of an obscure maiden of Byzantium. Every visit Pausanias paid to Cleonice but served in his eyes as a prelude to her u timate dishonor. He lent himself, therefor with all the zeal of his vivacious and arde character, to the design of removing Pausania himself from Byzantium. He plotted wit the implacable Uliades and the other Ionia captains to send to Sparta a formal missio stating their grievances against the Regen and urging his recall.

But the altered manner of Pausanias d prived them of their just pretext; and th Ionians, more and more under the influence the Athenian chief, were disinclined to so e treme a measure without the consent of Ari tides and Cimon. These two chiefs were n passive spectators of affairs so critical to the ambition for Athens—they penetrated into th motives of Pausanias in the novel courtesy demeanor that he adopted, and they foresa that if he could succeed in wearing away th patience of the allies and dispersing the flee yet without giving occasion for his own recal the golden opportunity of securing to Athe the maritime ascendancy would be lost. The resolved, therefore, to make the occasio which the wiles of the Regent had delaye and towards this object Antagoras, move by his own jealous hate against Pausania worked incessantly. Fearless and vigilan he was ever on the watch for some ne charge against the Spartan chief, ever r lentless in stimulating suspicion, aggr vating discontent inflaming the fierce, an arguing with the timid. His less exalte station allowed him to mix more familiarl with the various Ionian officers than woul have become the high-born Cimon, and th dignified repute of Aristides. Seeking to di tract his mind from the haunting thought Cleonice, he flung himself with the ardor his Greek temperament into the social plea ures, which took a zest from the design th he carried into them all. In the banquets, the sports, he was ever seeking to increase th enemies of his rival, and where he charmed gay companion, there he often enlisted a bo conspirator.

Pausanias, the unconscious or the carele object of the Ionian's jealous hate, could n resist the fatal charm of Cleonice's presenc and if it sometimes exasperated the more ev elements of his nature, at other times it lulled them to rest that had the Fates give

him the rightful claim to that single treasure, not one guilty thought might have disturbed the majesty of a soul which, though undisciplined and uncultured, owed half its turbulence and half its rebellious pride to its baffled yearnings for human affection and natural joy. And Cleonice, unable to shun the visits which her weak and covetous father, despite his promised favor to the suit of Antagoras, still encouraged; and feeling her honor, at least, if not her peace, was secured by that ascendancy which, with each successive interview between them, her character more and more asserted over the Spartan's higher nature, relinquished the tormenting levity of tone whereby she had once sought to elude his earnestness, or conceal her own sentiments. An interest in a fate so solemn, an interest far deeper than mere human love, stole into her heart and elevated its instincts. She recognized the immense compassion which was due to the man so desolate at the head of armaments, so dark in the midst of glory. Centuries roll, customs change, but, ever since the time of the earliest mother, woman yearns to be the soother.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the hour of the day when between the two principal meals of the Greeks men surrendered themselves to idleness or pleasure; when groups formed in the market-place, or crowded the barbers' shops to gossip and talk of news; when the tale-teller or ballad-singer collected round him on the quays his credulous audience; when on playgrounds that stretched behind the taverns or without the walls the more active youths assembled, and the quoit was hurled, or mimic battles waged with weapons of wood, or the Dorians weaved their simple, the Ionians their more intricate or less decorous, dances. At that hour Lysander, wandering from the circles of his countrymen, walked musingly by the sea-shore.

"And why," said the voice of a person who had approached him unperceived, "and why, O Lysander, art thou absent from thy comrades, thou model and theme of the youths of Sparta, foremost in their manly sports, as in their martial labors?"

Lysander turned and bowed low his graceful head, for he who accosted him was scarcely more honored by the Athenians, whom his birth, his wealth, and his popular demeanor dazzled, than by the plain sons of Sparta, who, in his simple garb, his blunt and hasty manner, his professed admiration for all things Spartan, beheld one Athenian at least congenial to their tastes.

"The child that misses its mother," answered Lysander, "has small joy with its playmates. And I, a Spartan, pine for Sparta."

"Truly," returned Cimon, "there must be charms in thy noble country of which we other Greeks know but little, if amidst all the luxuries and delights of Byzantium thou canst pine for her rugged hills. And although, as thou knowest well, I was once a sojourner in thy city as ambassador from my own, yet to foreigners so little of the inner Spartan life is revealed, that I pray thee to satisfy my curiosity and explain to me the charm that reconciles thee and thine to institutions which seem to the Ionians at war with the pleasures and the graces of social life."*

"Ill can the native of one land explain to the son of another why he loves it,' returned Lysander. "That which the Ionian calls pleasure is to me but tedious vanity; that which he calls grace is to me but enervate levity. Me it pleases to find the day, from sunrise to night, full of occupations that leave no languor, that employ, but not excite. For the morning, our gymnasia, our military games, the chase—diversions that brace the limbs and leave us in peace fit for war—diversions, which, unlike the brawls of the wordy Agora, bless us with the calm mind and clear spirit resulting from

* Alexander, King of Macedon, had visited the Athenians with overtures of peace and alliance from Xerxes and Mardonius. These overtures were confined to the Athenians alone, and the Spartans were fearful lest they should be accepted. The Athenians, however, generously refused them. Gold, said they, hath no amount, earth no territory how beautiful soever that could tempt the Athenians to accept conditions from the Mede for the servitude of Greece. On this the Persians invaded Attica, and the Athenians, after waiting in vain for promised aid from Sparta, took refuge at Salamis. Meanwhile, they had sent messengers or ambassadors to Sparta, to remonstrate on the violation of their agreement in delaying succor. This chanced at the very time when, by the death of his father Cleombrotus, Pausanias became Regent. Slowly, and after much hesitation, the Spartans sent them aid under Pausanias. Two of the ambassadors were Aristides and Cimon.

vigorous habits, and ensuring jocund health. Noon brings our simple feast, shared in public, enlivened by jest; late at eve we collect in our Leschæ, and the winter nights seem short, listening to the old men's talk of our sires and heroes. To us life is one serene yet active holiday. No Spartan condescends to labor, yet no Spartan can womanize himself by ease. For us, too, differing from you Ionian Greeks, for us women are companions, not slaves. Man's youth is passed under the eyes and in the presence of those from whom he may select, as his heart inclines, the future mother of his children. Not for us your feverish and miserable ambitions, the intrigues of demagogues, the drudgery of the mart, the babble of the populace; we alone know the quiet repose of heart. That which I see everywhere else, the gnawing strife of passion, visits not the stately calm of the Spartan life. We have the leisure, not of the body alone, but of the soul. Equality with us is the all in all, and we know not that jealous anguish—the desire to rise one above the other. We busy ourselves not in making wealth, in ruling mobs, in ostentatious rivalries of state, and gaud, and power—struggles without an object. When we struggle it is for an end. Nothing moves us from our calm but danger to Sparta, or woe to Hellas. Harmony, peace, and order—these are the graces of our social life. Pity us, O Athenian!"

Cimon had listened with profound attention to a speech unusually prolix and descriptive for a Sparton; and he sighed deeply as it closed. For that young Athenian, destined to so renowned a place in the history of his country, was, despite his popular manners, no favorer of the popular passions. Lofty and calm, and essentially an aristocrat by nature and opinion, this picture of a life unruffled by the restless changes of democracy, safe and aloof from the shifting humors of the multitude, charmed and allured him. He forgot for the moment those counter propensities which made him still Athenian—the tastes for magnificence, the love of women, and the desire of rule. His busy schemes slept within him, and he answered:

"Happy is the Spartan who thinks with you. Yet," he added, after a pause, "yet own that there are amongst you many to whom the life you describe has ceased to proffer the charms that enthrall you, and who envy the more diversified and exciting existence of surrounding States. Lysander's eulogiums shame his chief Pausanias."

"It is not for me, nor for thee, whose years scarce exceed my own, to judge of our elders in renown," said Lystander, with a slight shade over his calm brow. "Pausanias will surely be found still a Spartan, when Sparta needs him; and the heart of the Heracleid beats under the robe of the Mede."

"Be frank with me, Lysander; thou knowest that my own countrymen often jealously accuse me of loving Sparta too well. I imitate, say they, the manners and dress of the Spartan, as Pausanias those of the Mede. Trust me then, and bear with me, when I say that Pausanias ruins the cause of Sparta. If he tarry here longer in the command he will render all the allies enemies to thy country. Already he has impaired his fame and dimmed his laurels; already, despite his pretexts and excuses, we perceive that his whole nature is corrupted. Recall him to Sparta, while it is yet time—time to reconcile the Greeks with Sparta, time to save the hero of Platæa from the contaminations of the East. Preserve his own glory, dearer to thee as his special friend than to all men, yet dear to me, though an Athenian, from the memory of the deeds which delivered Hellas."

Cimon spoke with the blunt and candid eloquence natural to him, and to which his manly countenance and earnest tone and character for truth gave singular effect.

Lysander remained long silent. At length he said, "I neither deny nor assent to thine arguments, son of Miltiades. The Ephors alone can judge of their wisdom."

"But if we address them, by message, to the Ephors, thou and the nobler Spartans will not resent our remonstrances?"

"All that injures Pausanias Lysander will resent. Little know I of the fables of poets, but Homer is at least as familiar to the Dorian as to the Ionian, and I think with him that between friends there is but one love and one anger."

"Then are the frailties of Pausanias dearer to thee than his fame, or Pausanias himself dearer to thee than Sparta—the erring brother than the venerable mother?"

Lysander's voice died on his lips; the reproof

struck home to him. He turned away his face, and with a slow wave of his hand seemed to implore forbearance. Cimon was touched by the action and the generous embarrassment of the Spartan; he saw, too, that he had left in the mind he had addressed thoughts that might work as he had designed, and he judged by the effect he produced on Lysander what influence the same arguments might effect addressed to others less under the control of personal friendship. Therefore, with a few gentle words, he turned aside, continued his way, and left Lysander alone.

Entering the town, the Athenian threaded his path through some of the narrow lanes and alleys that wound from the quays towards the citidal, avoiding the broader and more frequented streets. The course he took was such as rendered it little probable that he should encounter any of the higher classes, and especially the Spartans, who form their constitutional pride shunned the resorts of the populace. But as he came nearer the citidal stray Helots were seen at times, emerging from the inns and drinking houses, and these stopped short and inclined low if they caught sight of him at a distance, for his hat and staff, his majestic stature, and composed step, made them take him for a Spartan.

One of these slaves, however, emerging suddenly from a house close by which Cimon passed, recognized him, and retreating within abruptly, entered a room in which a man sat alone, and seemingly in profound thought; his cheek rested on one hand, with the other he leaned upon a small lyre, his eyes were bent on the ground, and he started, as a man does dream-like from a reverie, when the Helot touched him and said abruptly, and in a tone of surprise and inquiry—

"Cimon, the Athenian, is ascending the hill towards the Spartan quarter."

"The Spartan quarter! Cimon!" exclaimed Alcman, for it was he. "Give me thy cap and hide."

Hastily enduing himself in these rough garments, and drawing the cap over his face, the Mothon hurried to the threshold, and, seeing the Athenian at the distance, followed his footsteps, though with the skill of a man used to ambush he kept himself unseen—now under the projecting roofs of the houses, now skirting the wall, which, heavy with buttresses, led towards the outworks of the citadel. And with such success did he pursue his track that when Cimon paused at last at the place of his destination, and gave one vigilant and searching glance around him, he detected no living form.

He had then reached a small space of tableland on which stood a few trees of great age—all that time and the encroachments of the citadel and the town had spared of the sacred grove which formerly surrounded a rude and primitive temple, the grey columns of which gleamed through the heavy foliage. Passing with a slow and cautious step, under the thick shadow of these trees, Cimon now arrived before the open door of the temple, placed at the east so as to admit the first beams of the rising sun. Through the threshold, in the middle of the fane, the eye rested on the statue of Apollo, raised upon a lofty pedestal and surrounded by a rail—a statue not such as the later genius of the Athenian represented the god of light, and youth, and beauty; not wrought from Parian marble, or smoothest ivory, and in the divinest proportions of the human form, but rude, formal, and roughly hewn from the wood of the yew-tree—some early effigy of the god, made by the simple piety of the first Dorian colonizers of Byzantium. Three forms stood mute by an altar, equally homely and ancient, and adorned with horns, placed a little apart, and considerably below the statue.

As the shadow of the Athenian, who halted at the threshold, fell long and dark along the floor, the figures turned slowly, and advanced towards him. With an inclination of his head Cimon retreated from the temple; and, looking round, saw abutting from the rear of the building a small cell or chamber, which doubtless in former times had served some priestly purpose, but now, doorless, empty, desolate, showed the utter neglect into which the ancient shrine of the Dorian god had fallen amidst the gay and dissolute Byzantians. To this cell Cimon directed his steps; the men he had seen in the temple followed him, and all four, with brief and formal greeting, seated themselves, Cimon on a fragment of some broken column, the others on a bench that stretched along the wall.

"Peers of Sparta," said the Athenian, "ye have doubtless ere this revolved sufficiently

the grave matter which I opened to you in a former conference, and in which, to hear your decision, I seek at your appointment these sacred precincts."

"Son of Miltiades," answered the blunt Polydorous, "you inform us that it is the intention of the Athenians to despatch a messenger to Sparta demanding the instant recall of Pausanias. Yon ask us to second that request. But without our aid the Athenians are masters to do as they will. Why should we abet your quarrel against the Regent?"

"Friend," replied Cimon, "we, the Athenians, confess to no quarrel, with Pausanias; what we demand is to avoid all quarrel with him or yourselves. You seem to have overlooked my main arguments. Permit me to reurge them briefly. If Pausanias remains, the allies have resolved openly to revolt; if you, the Spartans assist your chief, as methinks you needs must do, you are at once at war with the rest of the Greeks. If you desert him you leave Hellas without a chief, and we will choose one of our own. Meanwhile, in the midst of our dissensions, the towns and states well affected to Persia will return to her sway; and Persia herself falls upon us as no longer an united enemy but an easy prey. For the sake, therefore, of Sparta and of Greece, we entreat you to co-operate with us; or rather, to let the recall of Pausanias be affected more by the wise precaution of the Spartans than by the fierce resolve of the other Greeks. So you save best the dignity of your State, and so, in reality, you best serve your chief. For less shameful to him is it to be recalled by you than to be deposed by us."

"I know not," said Gelon, surlily, "what Sparta hath to do at all with this foreign expedition; we are safe in our own defiles."

"Pardon me, if I remind you that you were scarcely safe at Thermopylæ, and that had the advice Demaratus proffered to Xerxes been taken, and that island of Cithera, which commands Sparta itself, been occupied by Persian troops, as in a future time, if Sparta desert Greece, it may be, you were undone. And, wisely or not, Sparta is now in command at Byzantium, and it behoves her to maintain, with the dignity she assumes, the interests she represents. Grant that Pausanias be recalled, another Spartan can succeed him. Whom of your countrymen would you prefer to that high post, if you, O Peers, aid us in the dismissal of Pausanias?" *

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* This chapter was left unfinished by the author; probably with the intention of recasting it. Such an intention, at least, is indicated by the marginal marks upon the MS.—L.

BOOK THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

THE fountain sparkled to the noonday, the sward around it was sheltered from the sun by vines formed into shadowy arcades, with interlaced leaves for roof. Afar through the vistas thus formed gleamed the blue of a sleeping sea.

Under the hills, or close by the margin of the fountain, Cleonice was seated upon a grassy knoll, covered with wild flowers. Behind her, at a little distance, grouped her handmaids, engaged in their womanly work, and occasionally conversing in whispers. At her feet reposed the grand form of Pausanias. Alcman stood not far behind him, his hand resting on his lyre, his gaze fixed upon the upward jet of the fountain.

"Behold," said Cleonice, "how the water soars up to the level of its source!"

"As my soul would soar to thy love," said the Spartan amorously.

"As thy soul should soar to the stars. O son of Hercules, when I hear thee burst into thy wild flights of ambition, I see not thy way to the stars."

"Why dost thou ever thus chide the ambition which may give me thee?"

"No, for thou mightest then be as much below me as thou art now above. Too humble to mate with the Heracleid, I am too proud to stoop to the Tributary of the Mede."

"Tributary for a sprinkling of water and a handful of earth. Well, my pride may revolt, too, from that tribute. But, alas! what is the tribute Sparta exacts from me now?—personal liberty—freedom of soul itself. The Mede's Tributary may be a king over millions; the Spartan Regent is a slave to the few."

"Cease — cease — cease. I will not hear thee," cried Cleonice, placing her hands on her ears.

Pausanias gently drew them away; and holding them both captive in the large clasp of his own right hand, gazed eagerly into her pure, unshrinking eyes.

"Tell me," he said, "for in much thou art wiser than I am, unjust though thou art. Tell me this. Look onward to the future with a gaze as steadfast as now meets mine, and say if thou canst discover any path, except that which it pleases thee to condemn, which may lead thee and me to the marriage altar!"

Down sank those candid eyes, and the virgin's cheek grew first rosy red, and then pale, as if every drop of blood had receded to the heart.

"Speak!" insisted Pausanias, softening his haughty voice to its meekest tone.

"I cannot see the path to the altar," murmured Cleonice, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"And if thou seest it not," returned Pausanias, "art thou brave enough to say—Be we lost to each other for life? I, though man and Spartan, am not brave enough to say that!"

He released her hands as he spoke, and clasped his own over his face. Both were long silent.

Alcman had for some moments watched the lovers with deep interest, and had caught into his listening ears the purport of their words. He now raised his lyre, and swept his hand over the chords. The touch was that of a master, and the musical sounds produced their effect on all. The handmaids paused from their work. Cleonice turned her eyes wistfully towards the Mothon. Pausanias drew his hands from his face, and cried joyously, "I accept the omen. Foster-brother, I have heard

that measure to a Hymeneal Song. Sing us the words that go with the melody."

"Nay," said Alcman gently, "the words are not those which are sung before youth and maiden when they walk over perishing flowers to bridal altars. They are the words which embody a legend of the land in which the heroes of old dwell, removed from earth, yet preserved from Hades."

"Ah," said Cleonice—and a strange expression, calmly mournful, settled on her features—"then the words may haply utter my own thoughts. Sing them to us, I pray thee."

The Mothon bowed his head, and thus began:—

THE ISLE OF SPIRITS.

Many wonders on the ocean
  By the moonlight may be seen;
Under moonlight on the Euxine
  Rose the blessed silver isle,

As Leostratus of Croton,
  At the Pythian God's behest,
Steer'd along the troubled waters
  To the tranquil spirit land.

In the earthquake of the battle,
  When the Locrians reel'd before
Croton's shock of marching iron,
  Strode a Phantom to their van:

Strode the shade of Locrian Ajax,
  Guarding still the native soil,
And Leastratus, confronting,
  Wounded fell before the spear.

Leech and herb the wound could heal not,
  Said the Pythian God, "Depart.
Voyage o'er the troubled Euxine
  To the tranquil spirit-land.

"There abides the Locrian Ajax,
  He who gave the wound shall heal;
Godlike souls are in their mercy
  Stronger yet than in their wrath."

While at ease on lulled waters
  Rose the blessed silver isle,
Purple vines in lengthening vistas
  Knit the hill-top to the beach.

And the beach had sparry caverns,
  And a floor of golden sands,
And wherever soared the cypress,
  Underneath it bloomed the rose.

Glimmered there amid the vine trees
  Thoro' caverns, over beach,
Lifelike shadows of a beauty
  Which the living know no more,

Towering statues of great heroes,
  They who fought at Thebes and Troy,
And with looks that poets dream of
  Beam'd the women heroes loved.

Kingly, forth before their comrades,
  As the vessel touched the shore,
Came the stateliest Two, by Hymen
  Ever hallowed into One.

As He strode, the forests trembled
  To the awe that crowned his brow:
As She stepped, the ocean dimpled
  To the ray that left her smile.

"Welcome hither, fearless warrior!"
  Said a voice in which there slept
Thunder-sounds to scatter armies,
  As a north-wind scatters leaves.

"Welcome hither, wounded sufferer,"
  Said a voice of music low
As the coo of doves that nestle
  Under summer boughs at noon.

"Who are ye, O shapes of glory?"
  Ask'd the wondering living man:
Quoth the Man-ghost, "This is Helen,
  And the Fair is for the Brave.

"Fairest prize to bravest victor;
  Whom doth Greece her bravest deem?"
Said Leostratus, 'Achilles:"
  "Bride and bridegroom then are we."

"Low I kneel to thee, Pelides,
  But, O marvel, she thy bride,
She whose guilt unpeopled Hellas,
  She whose marriage lights fired Troy?"

Frown'd the large front of Achilles,
  Overshadowing sea and sky,
Even as when between Olympus
  And Oceanus hangs storm.

"Know, thou dullard," said Pelides,
  "That on the funereal pyre
Earthly sins are purged from glory,
  And the Soul is as the Name."

If to her in life—a Paris,
  If to me in life—a slave,
Helen's mate is *here* Achilles,
  Mine—the sister of the stars.

Nought of her survives but beauty,
  Nought of me survives but fame;
Here the Beautiful and Famous
  Intermingle evermore.

Then throughout the Blessed Island
  Sang aloud the Race of Light,
"Know, the Beautiful and Famous
  Marry here for evermore!"

"Thy song bears a meaning deeper than words," said Pausanias; "but if that meani be consolation, I comprehend it not."

"I do," said Cleonice. "Singer, I pray thee draw near. Let us talk of what my lost mother said was the favorite theme of the grander sages of Miletus. Let us talk of what lies afar and undiscovered amid waters more troubled than the Euxine. Let us speak of the Land of Souls."

"Who ever returned from that land to tell us of it?" said Pausanias. "Voyagers that never voyaged thither save in song."

"Son of Cleombrotus," said Alcman, "hast thou not heard that in one of the cities founded by thine ancestor, Hercules, and named after his own name, there yet dwells a Priesthood that can summon to living eyes the Phantoms of the Dead?"

"No," answered Pausanias, with the credulous wonder common to eager natures which Philosophy has not withdrawn from the realm of superstition.

"But," asked Cleonice, "does it need the Necromancer to convince us that the soul does not perish when the breath leaves the lips? If I judge the burthen of thy song aright, thou art not, O singer, uninitiated in the divine and consoling doctrines which, emanating, it is said, from the schools of Miletus, establish the immortality of the soul, not for Demigods and Heroes only, but for us all; which imply the soul's purification from earthly sins, in some regions less chilling and stationary than the sunless and melancholy Hades."

Alcman looked at the girl surprised.

"Art thou not, maiden," said he, "one of the many female disciples whom the successors of Pythagoras the Samian have enrolled?"

"Nay," said Cleonice modestly; "but my mother had listened to great teachers of wisdom, and I speak imperfectly the thoughts I have heard her utter when she told me she had no terror of the grave."

"Fair Byzantine," returned the Mothon, while Pausanias, leaning his upraised face on his hand, listened mutely to themes new to his mind and foreign to his Spartan culture. "Fair Byzantine, we in Lacedæmon, whether free or enslaved, are not educated to the subtle learning which distinguishes the intellect of Ionian Sages. But I, born and licensed to be a poet, converse eagerly with all who swell the stores which enrich the treasure-house of song. And thus, since we have left the land of Sparta, and more especially in yon city, the centre of many tribes and of many minds, I have picked up, as it were, desultory and scattered notions, which, for want of a fitting teacher, I bind and arrange for myself as well as I may. And since the ideas that now float through the atmosphere of Hellas are not confined to the great, nay, perhaps are less visible to them than to those whose eyes are not riveted on the absorbing substances of ambition and power, so I have learned something, I know not how, save that I have listened and reflected. And here, where I have heard what sages conjecture of a world which seems so far off, but to which we are so near that we may reach it in a moment, my interest might indeed be intense. For what is this world to him who came into it a slave?"

"Alcman," exclaimed Pausanias, "the foster-brother of the Heracleid is no more a slave."

The Mothon bowed his head gratefully, but the expression on his face retained the same calm and sombre resignation.

"Alas," said Cleonice, with the delicacy of female consolation, "who in this life is really free? Have citizens to thraldom in custom and law? Are we not all slaves?"

"True. All slaves!" murmered the royal victor. "Envy none, O Alcman. Yet," he continued, gloomily, "what is the life beyond the grave which sacred tradition and ancient song holds out to us? Not thy silver island, vain singer, unless it be only for an early race more immediately akin to the Gods. Shadows in the shade are the dead; at the best reviving only their habits when on earth, in phantom-like delusions; aiming spectral darts like Orion at spectral lions; things bloodless and pulseless; existences followed to no purpose through eternity, as dreams are through a night. Who cares so to live again? Not I."

"The sages that now rise around, and speak oracles different from those heard at Delphi," said Alcman, "treat not thus the Soul's immortality. They begin by inquiring how creation rose; they seek to find the primitive element; what that be they dispute; some say the fiery, some the airy, some the ethereal element. Their language here is obscure. But it is a something which forms, harmonizes, works, and lives on for ever. And of that something is the Soul; creative, harmonious, active, an element in itself. Out of its devel-

opment here, that soul comes on to a new development elsewhere. If here the beginning lead to that new development in what we call virtue, it moves to light and joy—if it can only roll on through the grooves it has here made for itself, in what we call vice and crime, its path is darkness and wretchedness."

"In what we call virtue—what we call vice and crime? Ah," said Pausanias, with a stern sneer, "Spartan virtue, O Alcman, is what a Helot may call crime. And if ever the Helot rose and shouted freedom, would he not say, This is virtue? Would the Spartan call it virtue, too, my foster-brother?"

"Son of Cleombrotus," answered Alcman, "it is not for me to vindicate the acts of the master; nor to blame the slave who is of my race. Yet the sage definers of virtue distinguish between the Conscience of a Polity and that of the Individual Man. Self-preservation is the instinct of every community, and all the ordinances ascribed to Lycurgus are designed to preserve the Spartan existence. For what are the pure Spartan race? a handful of men established as lords in the midst of a hostile population. Close by the eyrie thine eagle fathers built in the rocks, hung the silent Amyclæ, a city of foes that cost the Spartans many generations to subdue. Hence thy State was a camp, its citizens sentinels; its children were brought up from the cradle to support the stern life to which necessity devoted the men. Hardship and privation were second nature. Not enough to be brave; vigilance was equally essential. Every Spartan life was precious; therefore came the cunning which characterizes the Spartan; therefore the boy is permitted to steal, but punished if detected; therefore the whole Commonwealth strives to keep aloof from the wars of Greece unless itself be threatened. A single battle in a common cause might suffice to depopulate the Spartan race, and leave it at the mercy of the thousands that so reluctantly own its dominion. Hence the ruthless determination to crush the spirit, to degrade the class of the enslaved Helots; hence its dread lest the slumbering brute force of the Servile find in its own masses a head to teach the consciousness, and a hand to guide the movements, of its power. These are the necessities of the Polity, its vices are the outgrowth of its necessities; and the life that so galls thee, and which has sometimes rendered mad those who return to it from having known another, and the danger that evermore surrounds the lords of a sullen multitude, are the punishments of these vices. Comprehendest thou?"

"I comprehend."

"But individuals have a conscience apart from that of the Community. Every community has its errors in its laws. No human laws, how skilfully soever framed, but give to a national character defects as well as merits, merits as well as defects. Craft, selfishness, cruelty to the subdued, inhospitable frigidity to neighbors, make the defects of the Spartan character. But," added Alcman, with a kind of reluctant anguish in his voice, "the character has its grand virtues, too, or would the Helots not be the masters? Valor indomitable; grand scorn of death; passionate ardor for the State which is so severe a mother to them; antique faith in the sacred altars; sublime devotion to what is held to be duty. Are these not found in the Spartan beyond all the Greeks, as thou seest them in thy friend Lysander; in that soul, stately, pure, compact in its own firm substance as a statue within a temple is in its Parian stone? But what the Gods ask from man is virtue in himself, according as he comprehends it. And, therefore, here all societies are equal; for the Gods pardon in the man the faults he shares with his Community, and ask from him but the good and the beautiful, such as the nature of his Community will permit him to conceive and to accomplish. Thou knowest that there are many kinds of music—for instance, the Doric, the Æolian, the Ionian—in Hellas.

"The Lydians have their music, the Phrygians theirs too. The Scyth and the Mede doubtless have their own. Each race prefers the music it cultivates, and finds fault with the music of other races. And yet a man who has learned melody and measure will recognize a music in them all. So it is with virtue, the music of the human soul. It differs in differing races. But he who has learned to know what virtue is can recognize its harmonies, wherever they be heard. And thus the soul that fulfils its own notions of music, and carries them up to its idea of excellence, is the master soul; and in the regions to which it goes, when the breath leaves the lips it pur-

sues, the same are set free from the trammels that confined, and the false judgments that marred it here. For then the soul is no longer Spartan, or Ionian, Lydian, Median, or Scythian. Escaped into the upper air, it is the citizen of universal freedom and universal light. And hence it does not live as a ghost in gloomy shades, being merely a pale memory of things that have passed away; but in its primitive being as an emanation from the one divine principle which penetrates everywhere, vivifies all things, and enjoys in all. This is what I weave together from the doctrines of varying schools; schools that collect from the fields of thought flowers of different kinds which conceal, by adorning it, the ligament that unites them all: this, I say, O Pausanias, is my conception of the soul."

Cleonice rose softly and taking from her bosom a rose, kissed it fervently, and laid it at the feet of the singer.

"Were this my soul," cried she, "I would ask thee to bind it in the wreath."

Vague and troubled thoughts passed meanwhile through the mind of the Heracleid; old ideas being disturbed and dislodged, the new ones did not find easy settlement in a brain occupied with ambitious schemes and a heart agitated by stormy passions. In much superstitious, in much sceptical, as education had made him the one, and experience but of worldly things was calculated to make him the other, he followed not the wing of the philosophy which passed through heights not occupied by Olympus, and dived into depths where no Tartarus echoed to the wail of Cocytus.

After a pause he said in his perplexity:

"Well mayst thou own that no Delphian oracle tells thee all this. And when thou speakest of the Divine Principle as One, dost thou not, O presumptuous man, depopulate the Halls of Ida! Nay, is it not Zeus himself whom thou dethronest; is not thy Divine Principle the Fate which Zeus himself must obey?"

"There is a young man of Clazomenæ," answered the singer, "named Anaxagoras, who avoiding all active life, though of birth the noblest, gives himself up to contemplation, and whom I have listened to in the city as he passed through it, on his way into Egypt. And I heard him say, 'Fate is an empty name.'* Fate is blind, the Divine is All-seeing."

"How!" cried Cleonice. "An empty name—she! Necessity the All-compelling."

The musician drew from the harp one of the most artful of Sappho's exquisite melodies.

"What drew forth that music?" he asked, smiling. "My hand and my will from a genius not present, not visible. Was that genius a blind fate? no, it was a grand intelligence. Nature is to the Deity what my hand and will are to the unseen genius of the musician. They obey an intelligence and they form a music. If creation proceed from an intelligence, what we call fate is but the consequence of its laws. And Nature operates not in the external world alone, but in the core of all life; therefore in the mind of man obeying only what some supreme intelligence has placed there; therefore in man's mind producing music or discord, according as he has learned the principles of harmony, that is, of good.

"And there be sages who declare that Intelligence and Love are the same. Yet," added the Mothon, with an aspect solemnly compassionate, "not the love thou mockest by the name of Aphrodite. No mortal eye hath ever seen that love within the known sphere, yet all insensibly feel its reign. What keeps the world together but affection? What makes the earth bring forth its fruits, but the kindness which beams in the sunlight and descends in the dews? What makes the lioness watch over her cubs, and the bird, with all air for its wanderings, come back to the fledglings in its nest? Strike love, the conjoiner, from creation, and creation returns to a void. Destroy love the parental, and life is born but to perish. Where stop the influence of love or how limit its multiform degrees? Love guards the fatherland; crowns with turrets the walls of the freeman. What but love binds the citizens of States together, and frames and heeds the laws that submit individual liberty to the rule of the common good? Love creates, love cements, love enters and harmonizes all things. And as like attracts like, so love attracts in the hereafter the loving souls that conceived it here. From the region where it summons

* Anaxagoras was then between twenty and thirty years of age.—See Ritter, vol. ii., for the sentiment here ascribed to him, and a general view of his tenets.

them, its opposites are excluded. There ceases war, there ceases pain. There indeed intermingle the beautiful and glorious, but beauty purified from earthly sin, the glorious resting from earthly toil. Ask ye how to know on earth where love is really presiding? Not in Paphos, not in Amathus. Wherever thou seest beauty and good; wherever thou seest life, and that life pervaded with faculties of joy, there thou seest love; there thou shouldst recognize the Divinity."

"And where I see misery and hate," said the Spartan, "what should I recognize there?"

"Master," returned the singer, "can the good come without a struggle? Is the beautiful accomplished without strife? Recall the tales of primeval chaos, when, as sang the Ascræan singer, love first darted into the midst; imagine the heave and throe of joining elements; conjure up the first living shapes, born of the fluctuating slime and vapor. Surely they were things incomplete, deformed ghastly fragments of being, as are the dreams of a maniac. Had creative Love stopped there, and then, standing on the height of some fair completed world, had viewed the warring portents, wouldst thou not have said—But these are the works of Evil and Hate? Love did not stop there, it worked on; and out of the chaos once ensouled, this glorious world swung itself into ether, the completed sister of the stars. Again, O my listeners, contemplate the sculptor, when the block from the granite shaft first stands rude and shapeless before him. See him in his earlier strife with the obstinate matter—how uncouth the first outline of limb and feature; unlovelier often in the rugged commencements of shape than when the dumb man stood shapeless. If the sculptor had stopped there, the thing might serve as an image for the savage of an abominable creed, engaged in the sacrifice of human flesh. But he pauses not, he works on. Stroke by stroke comes from the stone a shape of more beauty than man himself is endowed with, and in a human temple stands a celestial image.

"Thus is it with the soul in the mundane sphere; it works its way on through the adverse matter. We see its work half completed; we cry, Lo, this is misery, this is hate—because the chaos is not yet a perfected world, and the stone block is not yet a statue of Apollo. But for that reason must we pause? no, we must work on, till the victory brings the repose.

"All things come into order from the war of contraries—the elements fight and wrestle to produce the wild flower at our feet; from a wild flower man hath striven and toiled to perfect the marvellous rose of the hundred leaves. Hate is necessary for the energies of love, evil for the activity of good; until, I say, the victory is won, until Hate and Evil are subdued, as the sculptor subdues the stone; and then rises the divine image serene for ever, and rests on its pedestal in the Uranian Temple, Lift thine eyes; that temple is yonder. O Pausanias, the sculptor's work-room is the earth."

Alcman paused, and sweeping his hand once more over his lyre, chanted as follows:

"Dewdrop that weepest on the sharp-barbèd thorn,
Why didst thou fall from Day's golden chalices?
'My tears bathe the thorn,' said the Dewdrop,
'To nourish the bloom of the rose.'

"Soul of the Infant, why to calamity
Comest thou wailing from the calm spirit-source?
'Ask of the Dew,' said the Infant,
'Why it descends on the thorn!'

"Dewdrop from storm, and soul from calamity
Vanish soon—whither? let the Dew answer thee;
'Have not my tears been my glory?
Tears drew me up to the sun.'

"What were thine uses, that thou art glorified?
What did thy tears give, profiting earth or sky?
'There, to the thorn-stem a blossom,
'Here, to the Iris a tint.'"

Alcman had modulated the tones of his voice into a sweetness so plaintive and touching that, when he paused, the handmaidens had involuntarily risen and gathered round, hushed and noiseless. Cleonice had lowered her veil over her face and bosom; but the heaving of its tissue betrayed her half-suppressed, gentle sob; and the proud mournfulness on the Spartan's swarthy countenance had given way to a soft composure, melancholy still—but melancholy as a lulled, though dark water, over which starlight steals through disparted cloud.

Cleonice was the first to break the spell which bound them all.

"I would go within," she murmured faintly. 'The sun, now slanting, strikes through the vine-leaves, and blinds me with its glare."

Pausanias approached timidly, and taking her by the hand, drew her aside, along one of the grassy alleys that stretched onwards to the sea.

The handmaidens tarried behind to cluster nearer round the singer. They forgot he was a slave.

CHAPTER II.

"THOU art weeping still, Cleonice!" said the Spartan, "and I have not the privilege to kiss away thy tears."

"Nay, I weep not," answered the girl throwing up her veil; and her face was calm, if still sad—the tear yet on the eyelids, but the smile upon the lip — δακρύων γελάουσα. "Thy singer has learned his art from a teacher heavenlier than the Pierides and its name is Hope."

"But if I understand him aright," said Pausanias, "the Hope that inspires him is a goddess who blesses us little on the earth."

As if the Mothon had overheard the Spartan, his voice here suddenly rose behind them, singing:

> "*There* the Beautiful and Glorious
> Intermingle evermore."

Involuntarily both turned. The Mothon seemed as if explaining to the handmaids the allegory of his marriage song upon Helen and Achilles, for his hand was raised on high, and again, with an emphasis, he chanted:

> "There, throughout the Blessed Islands,
> Aud amid the Race of Light,
> Do the Beautiful and Glorious
> Intermingle evermore."

"Canst thou not wait, if thou so lovest me?" said Cleonice, with more tenderness in her voice than it had ever yet betrayed to him; "life is very short. Hush!" she continued, checking the passionate interruption that burst from his lips; "I have something I would confide to thee: listen. Know that in my childhood I had a dear friend, a maiden a few years older than myself, and she had the divine gift of trance which comes from Apollo. Often, gazing into space, her eyes became fixed, and her frame still as a statue's; then a shiver seized her limbs, and prophecy broke from her lips. And she told me in one of these hours, when, as she said, 'all space and all time seemed spread before her like a sunlit ocean,' she told me of my future, so far as its leaves have yet unfolded from the stem of my life. Spartan, she prophesied that I should see thee—and—" Cleonice pause, blushing, and then hurried on, "and she told me that suddenly her eye could follow my fate on the earth no more, that it vanished out of the time and the space on which it gazed, and saying it she wept, and broke into funeral song. And therefore, Pausanias, I say life is very short for me at least——"

"Hold," cried Pausanias; "torture not me, nor delude thyself with the dreams of a raving girl. Lives she near? Let me visit her with thee, and I will prove thy prophetess an impostor."

"They whom the Priesthood of Delphi employ throughout Hellas to find the fit natures for a Pythoness heard of her, and heard herself. She whom thou callest impostor gives the answer to perplexed nations from the Pythian shrine. But wherefore doubt her?—where the sorrow? I feel none. If love does rule the worlds beyond, and does unite souls who love nobly here, yonder we shall meet, O descendant of Hercules, and human laws will nor part us there.

"Thou die! die before me! thou, scarcely half my years! And I be left here, with no comfort but a singer's dreamy voice, not even mine ambition! Thrones would vanish out of earth, and turn to cinders in thine urn."

"Speak not of thrones," said Cleonice, with imploring softness, "for the prophetess, too, spake of steps that went towards a throne, and vanished at the threshold of darkness, beside which sate the Furies. Speak not of thrones, dream but of glory and Hellas—of what thy soul tells thee is that virtue which makes life an Uranian music and thus unites it to the eternal symphony, as the breath of the single flute melts when it parts from the instrument into the great concord of the choir. Knowest thou not that in the creed of the Persians each mortal is watched on earth by a good spirit and an evil one? And they who loved us below, or to whom we have done beneficent and gentle deeds, if they go before us into death, pass to the side of the good spirit, and strengthen him to save and to bless

thee against the malice of the bad, and the bad is strengthened in his turn by those whom we have injured. Wouldst thou have all the Greeks whose birthright thou would barter, whose blood thou wouldst shed for barbaric aid to thy solitary and lawless power, stand by the side of the evil Fiend? And what could I do against so many? What could my soul do," added Cleonice with simple pathos, "by the side of the kinder spirit?

Pausanias was wholly subdued. He knelt to the girl, he kissed the hem of her robe, and for the moment ambition, luxury, pomp, pride fled from his soul, and left there only the grateful tenderness of the man, and the lofty instincts of the hero. But just then—was it the evil spirit that sent him?—the boughs of the vine were put aside, and Gongylus the Eretrian stood before them. His black eyes glittered keen upon Pausanias, who rose from his knee, startled and displeased.

"What brings thee hither, man?" said the Regent, haughtily.

"Danger," answered Gongylus, in a hissing whisper. "Lose not a moment—come."

"Danger!" exclaimed Cleonice, tremblingly, and clasping her hands, and all the human love at her heart was visible in her aspect. "Danger, and to *him!*"

"Danger is but as the breeze of my native air," said the Spartan, smiling; "thus I draw it in and thus breathe it away. I follow thee, Gongylus. Take my greeting, Cleonice—the Good to the Beautiful. Well, then, keep Alcman yet awhile to sing thy kind face to repose, and this time let him tune his lyre to songs of a more Dorian strain—songs that show what a Heracleid thinks of danger."

He waved his hand, and the two men, striding hastily, passed along the vine alley, darkened its vista for a few minutes, then vanishing down the descent to the beach, the wide blue sea again lay lone and still before the eyes of the Byzantine maid.

CHAPTER III.

PAUSANIAS and the Eretrian halted on the shore.

"Now speak," said the Spartan Regent. "Where is the danger?"

"Before thee," answered Gongylus, and his hand pointed to the ocean.

"I see the fleet of the Greeks in the harbor—I see the flag of my galley above the forest of their masts. I see detached vessels skimming along the waves hither and thither as in holiday and sport; but dicipline slackens where no foe dares to show himself. Eretrian, I see no danger."

"Yet danger is there, and where danger is thou shouldst be. I have learned from my spies, not an hour since, that there is a conspiracy formed—a mutiny on the eve of an outburst. Thy place now should be in thy galley."

"My boat waits yonder in that creek, overspread by the wild shrubs," answered Pausanias; "a few strokes of the oar, and I am where thou seest. And in truth, without thy summons, I should have been on board ere sunset, seeing that on the morrow I have ordered a general review of the vessels of the fleet. Was that to be the occasion of the mutiny?"

"So it is supposed."

"I shall see the faces of the mutineers," said Pausanias, with a calm visage, and an eye which seemed to brighten the very atmosphere. "Thou shakest thy head; is this all?"

"Thou art not a bird—this moment in one place, that moment in another. There, with yon armament is the danger thou canst meet. But yonder sails a danger which thou canst not, I fear me, overtake."

"Yonder!" said Pausanias, his eye following the hand of the Eretrian. "I see naught save the white wing of a seagull—perchance, by its dip into the water, it foretells a storm."

"Farther off than the seagull, and seeming smaller than the white spot of its wing, seest thou nothing?"

"A dim speck on the farthest horizon, if mine eyes mistake not."

"The speck of a sail that is bound to Sparta. It carries with it a request for thy recall."

This time the cheek of Pausanias paled, and his voice slightly faltered as he said:

"Art thou sure of this?"

"So I hear that the Samian captain, Uliades, has boasted at noon in the public baths."

"A Samian!—is it only a Samian who hath

ventured to address to Sparta a complaint of her General?"

"From what I could gather," replied Gongylus, "the complaint is more powerfully backed. But I have not as yet heard more, though I conjecture that Athens has not been silent, and before the vessel sailed Ionian captains were seen to come with joyous faces from the lodgings of Cimon."

The Regent's brow grew yet more troubled. "Cimon, of all the Greeks out of Laconia, is the one whose word would weigh most in Sparta. But my Spartans themselves are not suspected of privity and connivance in this mission?"

"It is not said that they are."

Pausanias shaded his face with his hand for a moment in deep thought. Gongylus continued—

"If the Ephors recall thee before the Asian army is on the frontier, farewell to the sovereignity of Hellas!"

"Ha!" cried Pausanias, "tempt me not. Thinkest thou I need other tempter than I have here?"—smiting his breast.

Gongylus recoiled in surprise. "Pardon me, Pausanias, but temptation is another word for hesitation. I dreamed not that I could tempt; I did not know that thou didst hesitate."

The Spartan remained silent.

"Are not thy messengers on the road to the great king?—nay, perhaps already they have reached him, Didst thou not say how intolerable to thee would be life henceforth in the iron thraldom of Sparta—and now?"

"And now—I forbid thee to question me more. Thou hast performed thy task, leave me to mine."

He sprang with the spring of the mountain goat from the crag on which he stood—over a precipitous chasm, lighted on a narrow ledge, from which a slip of the foot would have been sure death, another bound yet more fearful, and his whole weight hung suspended by the bough of the ilex which he grasped with a single hand; then from bough to bough, from crag to crag, the Eretrian saw him descending till he vanished amidst the trees that darkened over the fissures at the foot of the cliff.

And before Gongylus had recovered his amaze at the almost preterhuman agility and vigor of the Spartan, and his dizzy sense at the contemplation of such peril braved by another, a boat shot into the sea from the green creek, and he saw Pausanias seated beside Lysander on one of the benches, and conversing with him, as if in calm earnestness, while the ten rowers sent the boat towards the fleet with the swiftness of an arrow to its goal.

"Lysander," said Pausanias, "hast thou heard that the Ionians have offered to me the insult of a mission to the Ephors demanding my recall?"

"No. Who would tell me of insult to thee?"

"But hast thou any conjecture that other Spartans around me, and who love me less than thou, would approve, nay, have approved, this embassy of spies and malcontents?"

"I think none have so approved. I fear some would so approve. The Spartans round thee would rejoice did they know that the pride of their armies, the Victor of Platæa, were once more within their walls."

"Even to the danger of Hellas from the Mede?"

"They would rather all Hellas were Medised than Pausanias the Heracleid."

"Boy, boy," said Pausanias, between his ground teeth, "dost thou not see that what is sought is the disgrace of Pausanias the Heracleid? Grant that I am recalled from the head of this armament, and on the charge of Ionians, and I am dishonored in the eyes of all Greece. Dost thou remember in the last Olympiad that when Themistocles, the only rival now to be in glory, appeared on the Altis, assembled Greece rose to greet and do him honor? And if I, deposed, dismissed, appeared at the next Olympiad, how would assembled Greece receive me? Couldst thou not see the pointed finger and hear the muttered taunt—That is Pausanias, whom the Ionians banished from Byzantium. No, I must abide here; I must prosecute the vast plans which shall dwart into shadow the petty genius of Themistocles. I must counteract this mischievous embassy to the Ephors. I must send to them an ambassador of my own. Lysander, wilt thou go, and burying in thy bosom thine own Spartan prejudices, deem that thou canst only serve me by proving the reasons why I should remain here; pleading for me, arguing for me, and winning my suit?"

"It is for thee to command and for me to obey," answered Lysander, simply. "Is not that the duty of soldier to chief? When we converse as friends I may contend with thee in speech. When thou sayst, Do this, I execute thine action. To reason with thee would be revolt."

Pausanias placed his clasped hands on the young man's shoulder, and leaving them there, impressively said—

"I select thee for this mission because thee alone can I trust. And of me hast thou a doubt?—tell me."

"If I saw thee taking the Persian gold I should say that the Demon had mocked mine eyes with a delusion. Never could I doubt, unless—unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Thou wert standing under Jove's sky against the arms of Hellas."

"And then, if some other chief bade thee raise thy sword against me, thou art Spartan and wouldst obey?"

"I am Spartan, and cannot believe that I should ever have a cause, or listen to a command, to raise my sword against the chief I now serve and love," replied Lysander.

Pausanias withdrew his hands from the young man's broad shoulder. He felt humbled beside the quiet truth of that sublime soul. His own deceit became more black to his conscience. "Methinks," he said, tremulously, "I will not send thee after all—and perhaps the news may be false."

The boat had now gained the fleet, and steering amidst the crowded triremes, made its way towards the floating banner of the Spartan Serpent. More immediately round the General's galley were the vessels of the Peloponnesian allies, by whom he was still honored. A welcoming shout rose from the seamen lounging on their decks as they caught sight of the renowned Heracleid. Cimon, who was on his own galley at some distance, heard the shout.

"So Pausanias," he said, turning to the officers round him, "has deigned to come on board, to direct, I suppose, the manœuvres for to-morrow."

"I believe it is but the form of a review for manœuvres," said an Athenian officer, "in which Pausanias will inspect the various divisions of the fleet, and if more be intended, will give the requisite orders for a subsequent day. No arrangements demanding much preparation can be anticipated, for Antagoras, the rich Chian, gives a great banquet this day—a supper to the principal captains of the Isles."

"A frank and hospitable reveller is Antagoras," answered Cimon. "He would have extended his invitation to the Athenians—me included—but in their name I declined."

"May I ask wherefore?" said the officer who had before spoken. "Cimon is not held averse to wine-cup and myrtle-bough."

"But things are said over some wine-cups and under some myrtle-boughs," answered Cimon, with a quiet laugh, "which it is imprudence to hear and would be treason to repeat. Sup with me here on deck, friends—a supper for sober companions—sober as the Laconian Syssitia, and let not Spartans say that *our* manners are spoilt by the luxuries of Byzantium."

CHAPTER IV.

In an immense peristyle of a house which a Byzantine noble, ruined by lavish extravagance, had been glad to cede to the accomodation of Antagoras and other officers of Chios, the young rival of Pausanias feasted the chiefs of the Ægean. However modern civilization may in some things surpass the ancient, it is certainly not in luxury and splendor. And although the Hellenic States had not, at that period, aimed at the pomp of show and the refinements of voluptuous pleasure which preceded their decline, and although they never did carry luxury to the wondrous extent which it reached in Asia, or even in Sicily, yet even at that time a wealthy sojourner in such a city as Byzantium could command an entertainment that no monarch in age would venture to parade before royal guests, and submit to the criticism of tax-paying subjects.

The columns of the peristyle were of dazzling alabaster, with their capitals richly gilt. The space above was roofless; but an immense awning of purple, richly embroidered in Persian looms—a spoil of some gorgeous Mede—shaded the feasters from the summer

sky. The couches on which the banqueters reclined were of citron wood, inlaid with ivory, and covered with the tapestries of Asiatic looms. At the four corners of the vast hall played four fountains, and their spray sparkled to a blaze of light from colossal candelabra, in which burnt perfumed oil. The guests were not assembled at a single table, but in small groups; to each group its tripod of exquisite workmanship. To that feast of fifty revellers no less than seventy cooks had contributed the inventions of their art, but under one great master, to whose care the banquet had been consigned by the liberal host, and who ransacked earth, sky, and sea for dainties more various than this degenerate age ever sees accumulated at a single board. And the epicure who has but glanced over the elaborate page of Athenæus, must own with melancholy self-humiliation that the ancients must have carried the art of flattering the palate to a perfection as absolute as the art which built the Parthenon, and sculptured out of gold and ivory the Olympian Jove. But the first course, with its profusion of birds, flesh, and fishes, its marvellous combinations of forced meats, and inventive poetry of sauces, was now over. And in the interval preceding that second course, in which gastronomy put forth its most exquisite master-pieces, the slaves began to remove the tables, soon to be replaced. Vessels of fragrant waters, in which the banqueters dipped their fingers, were handed round; perfumes, which the Byzantine marts collected from every clime, escaped from their precious receptacles.

Then were distributed the garlands. With these each guest crowned locks that steamed with odors; and in them were combined the flowers that most charmed the eye, with bud or herb that most guard from the head the fumes of wine: with hyacinth and flax, with golden asphodel and silver lily, the green of ivy and parsley leaf was thus entwined; and above all the rose, said to convey a delicious coolness to the temples on which it bloomed. And now for the first time wine came to heighten the spirits and test the charm of the garlands. Each, as the large goblet passed to him, poured from the brim, before it touched his lips, his libation to the good spirit. And as Antagoras, rising first, set this pious example, out from the further ends of the hall, behind the fountains, burst a concert of flutes, and the great Hellenic Hymn of the Pæan.

As this ceased, the fresh tables appeared before the banqueters, covered with all the fruits in season, and with those triumphs in confectionery, of which honey was the main ingredient, that well justified the favor in which the Greeks held the bee.

Then, instead of the pure juice of the grape, from which the libation had been poured, came the wines, mixed at least three parts with water and deliciously cooled.

Up again rose Antagoras, and every eye turned to him.

"Companions," said the young Chian, "it is not held in free States well for a man to seize by himself upon supreme authority. We deem that a magistracy should only be obtained by the votes of others. Nevertheless, I venture to think that the latter plan does not always ensure to us a good master. I believe it was by election that we Greeks have given to ourselves a generalissimo, not contented, it is said, to prove the invariable wisdom of that mode of government; wherefore this seems an occasion to revive the good custom of tyranny. And I propose to do so in my person by proclaiming myself Symposiarch and absolute commander in the Commonwealth here assembled. But if ye prefer the chance of the die——"

"No, no," cried the guests, almost universally; "Antagoras, the Symposiarch, we submit. Issue thy laws."

"Hearken then, and obey. First, then, as to the strength of the wine. Behold the crater in which there are three Naiades to one Dionysos. He is a match for them; not for more. No man shall put into his wine more water than the slaves have mixed. Yet if any man is so diffident of the god that he thinks three Naiades too much for him, he may omit one or two, and let the wine and the water fight it out upon equal terms. So much for the quality of the drink. As to quantity, it is a question to be deliberated hereafter. And now this cup to Zeus the Preserver."

The toast went round.

"Music, and the music of Lydia!" then shouted Antagoras, and resumed his place on the couch beside Uliades.

The music proceeded, the wines circled.

"Friend," whispered Uliades to the host,

"thy father left thee wines, I know. But if thou givest many banquets like this, I doubt if thou wilt leave wines to thy son."

"I shall die childless, perhaps," answered the Chian; "and any friend will give me enough to pay Charon's fee across the Styx."

"That is a melancholy reflection," said Uliades, "and there is no subject of talk that pleases me less than that same Styx. Why dost thou bite thy lip, and choke the sigh? By the Gods! art thou not happy?"

"Happy!" repeated Antagoras, with a bitter smile. "Oh, yes!"

"Good! Cleonice torments thee no more. I myself have gone through thy trials; ay, and oftentimes. Seven times at Samos, five at Rhodes, once at Miletus, and forty-three times at Corinth, have I been an impassioned and unsuccessful lover. Courage; I love still."

Antagoras turned away. By this time the hall was yet more crowded, for many not invited to the supper came, as was the custom with the Greeks, to the Symposium; but these were all of the Ionian race.

"The music is dull without the dancers," cried the host. "Ho, there! the dancing girls. Now would I give all the rest of my wealth to see among these girls one face that yet but for a moment could make me forget—"

"Forget what, or whom?" said Uliades; "not Cleonice?"

"Man, man, wilt thou provoke me to strangle thee?" muttered Antagoras.

Uliades edged himself away.

"Ungrateful!" he cried. "What are a hundred Byzantine girls to one tried male friend?"

"I will not be ungrateful, Uliades, if thou stand by my side against the Spartan."

"Thou art, then, bent upon this perilous hazard?"

"Bent on driving Pausanias from Byzantium, or into Hades—yes."

"Touch!" said Uliades, holding out his right hand. "By Cypris, but those girls dance like the daughters of Oceanus; every step undulates as a wave."

Antagoras motioned to his cup-bearer. "Tell the leader of that dancing choir to come hither." The cup-bearer obeyed.

A man with a solemn air came to the foot of the Chian's couch, bowing low. He was an Egyptian—one of the meanest castes.

"Swarthy friend," said Antagoras, "didst thou ever hear of the Pyrrhic dance of the Spartans?"

"Surely, of all dances am I teacher and preceptor."

"Your girls know it, then?"

"Somewhat, from having seen it; but not from practice. 'Tis a male dance and a warlike dance, O magnanimous, but, in this instance, untutored, Chian!"

"Hist, and listen." Antagoras whispered. The Egyptian nodded his head, returned to the dancing girls, and when their measure had ceased, gathered them round him.

Antagoras again rose.

"Companions, we are bound now to do homage to our masters—the pleasant, affable and familiar warriors of Sparta."

At this the guests gave way to their applauding laughter.

"And therefore these delicate maidens will present to us that flowing and Amathusian dance; which the Graces taught to Spartan sinews. Ho, there! begin."

The Egyptian had by this time told the dancers what they were expected to do; and they came forward with an affectation of stern dignity, the burlesque humor of which delighted all those lively revellers. And when with adroit mimicry their slight arms and mincing steps mocked that grand and masculine measure so associated with images of Spartan austerity and decorum, the exhibition became so humorously ludicrous, that perhaps a Spartan himself would have been compelled to laugh at it. But the merriment rose to its height, when the Egyptian, who had withdrawn for a few minutes, re-appeared with a Median robe and mitred cap, and calling out in his barbarous African accent, "Way for the conqueror!" threw into his mien and gestures all the likeness of Pausanias himself, which a practised mime and posture-master could attain. The laughter of Antagoras alone was not loud—it was low and sullen, as if sobs of rage were stifling it; but his eye watched the effect produced, and it answered the end he had in view.

As the dancers now, while the laughter was at its loudest roar, vanished behind the draperies, the host rose, and his countenance was severe and grave—

"Companions, one cup more, and let it be

to Harmodius and Aristogiton. Let the song in their honor come only from the lips of free citizens, of our Ionian comrades. Uliades, begin. I pass to thee a myrtle bough; and under it I pass a sword."

Then he began the famous hymn ascribed to Callistratus, commencing with a clear and sonorous voice, and the guests repeating each stanza after him with the enthusiasm which the words usually produced among the Hellenic republicans:

I in a myrtle bough the sword will carry,
As did Harmodius and Aristogiton;
When they the tyrant slew,
And back to Athens gave her equal laws.

Thou art in nowise dead, best-loved Harmodius;
Isles of the Blessed are, they say, thy dwelling,
There swift Achilles dwells,
And there, they say, with thee dwells Diomed.

I in a myrtle bough the sword will carry,
As did Harmodius and Aristogiton,
When to Athen's shrine
They gave their sacrifice—a tyrant man.

Ever on earth for both of you lives glory,
O loved Harmodius, loved Aristogiton,
For ye the tyrant slew,
And back to Athens ye gave equal laws.

When the song had ceased, the dancers, the musicians, the attendant slaves had withdrawn from the hall, dismissed by a whispered order from Antagoras.

He, now standing up, took from his brows the floral crown, and first sprinkling them with wine, replaced the flowers by a wreath of poplar. The assembly, a little while before so noisy, was hushed into attentive and earnest silence. The action of Antagoras, the expression of his countenance, the exclusion of the slaves, prepared all present for something more than the convivial address of a Symposiarch.

"Men and Greeks," said the Chian, "on the evening before Teucer led his comrades in exile over the wide waters to found a second Salamis, he springled his forehead with Lyæan dews, being crowned with the poplar leaves —emblems of hardihood and contest; and, this done, he invited his companions to dispel their cares for the night, that their hearts might with more cheerful hope and bolder courage meet what the morrow might bring to them on the ocean. I imitate the ancient hero, in honor less of him than of the name of Salamis We, too, have a Salamis to remember, and a second Salamis to found. Can ye forget that had the advice of the Spartan leader Eurybiades been adopted, the victory of Salamis would never have been achieved? He was for retreat to the Isthmus; he was for defending the Peloponnese, because in the Peloponnesus was the unsocial selfish Sparta, and leaving the rest of Hellas to the armament of Xerxes. Themistocles spoke against the ignoble counsel; the Spartan raised his staff to strike him. Ye know the Spartan manners. 'Strike if you will, but hear me,' cried Themistocles. He was heard, Xerxes was defeated, and Hellas saved. "I am not Themistocles; nor is there a Spartan staff to silence free lips. But I too say, Hear me! for a new Salamis is to be won. What was the former Salamis?—the victory that secured independence to the Greeks, and delivered them from the Mede and the Medising traitor. Again we must fight a Salamis. Where, ye say, is the Mede? —not at Byzantium, it is true, in person; but the Medising traitor is here."

A profound sensation thrilled through the assembly.

"Enough of humility do the maritime Ionians practise when they accept the hegemony of a Spartan landsman; enough of submission do the free citizens of Hellas show when they suffer the imperious Dorian to sentence them to punishments only fit for slaves. But when the Spartan appears in the robes of the Mede, when the imperious Dorian places in the government of a city, which our joint arms now occupy, a recreant who has changed an Eretrian birthright for a Persian satrapy; when prisoners, made by the valor of all Hellas, mysteriously escape the care of the Lacedæmonian, who wears their garb, and imitates their manners—say, O ye Greeks, O ye warriors, if there is no second Salamis to conquer!"

The animated words, and the wine already drunk, produced on the banqueters an effect sudden, electrical, universal. They had come to the hall gay revellers; they were prepared to leave the hall stern conspirators.

Their hoarse murmur was as the voice of the sea before a storm.

Antagoras surveyed them with a fierce joy, and, with a change of tone, thus continued:— "Ye understand me, ye know already that a delivery is to be achieved. I pass on: I submit

to your wisdom the mode of achieving it. While I speak, a swift-sailing vessel bears to Sparta the complaints of myself, of Uliades, and of many Ionian captains here present, against the Spartan general. And although the Athenian chiefs decline to proffer complaints of their own, lest their State, which has risked so much for the common cause, be suspected of using the admiration it excites for the purpose of subserving its ambition, yet Cimon, the young son of the great Miltiades, who has ties of friendship and hospitality with families of high mark in Sparta, has been persuaded to add to our public statement a private letter to the effect, that speaking for himself, not in the name of Athens, he deems our complaints justly founded, and the recall of Pausanias expedient for the discipline of the armament. But can we say what effect this embassy may have upon a sullen and haughty government: against, too, a royal descendant of Hercules; against the general who at Platæa flattered Sparta with a renown to which her absence from Marathon, and her meditated flight from Salamis, gave but disputable pretensions?"

"And," interrupted Uliades, rising, "and—if, O Antagoras, I may crave pardon for standing a moment between thee and thy guests—and this is not all, for even if they recall Pausanias, they may send us another general as bad, and without the fame which somewhat reconciles our Ionian pride to the hegemony of a Dorian. Now, whatever my quarrel with Pausanias, I am less against a man than a principle. I am a seaman, and against the principle of having for the commander of the Greek fleet a Spartan who does not know how to handle a sail. I am an Ionian, and against the principle of placing the Ionian race under the imperious domination of a Dorian. Therefore I say, now is the moment to emancipate our blood and our ocean—the one from an alien, the other from a landsman. And the hegemony of the Spartan should pass away.

Uliades sat down with an applause more clamorous than had greeted the eloquence of Antagoras, for the pride of race and of special calling is ever more strong in its impulses than hatred to a single man. And despite of all that could be said against Pausanias, still these warriors felt awe for his greatness, and remembered that at Platæa, where all were brave, he had been proclaimed the bravest.

Antagoras, with the quickness of a republican Greek, trained from earliest youth to sympathy with popular assemblies, saw that Uliades had touched the right key, and swallowed down with a passionate gulp his personal wrath against his rival, which might otherwise have been carried too far, and have lost him the advantage he had gained.

"Rightly and wisely speaks Uliades," said he. "Our cause is that of our whole race and clear has that true Samian made it to you all, O Ionians and captains of the seas, that we must not wait for the lordly answer Sparta may return to our embassage. Ye know that while night lasts we must return to our several vessels; an hour more, and we shall be on deck. To-morrow Pausanias reviews the fleet and we may be some days before we return to land, and can meet in concert. Whether to-morrow or later the occasion for action may present itself, is a question I would pray you to leave to those whom you entrust with the discretionary power to act."

"How act?" cried a Lesbian officer.

"Thus would I suggest," said Antagoras with well dissembled humility; "let the captains of one or more Ionian vessels perform such a deed of open defiance against Pausanias as leaves to them no option between death and success; having so done, hoist a signal, and sailing at once to the Athenian ships, place themselves under the Athenian leader; all the rest of the Ionian captains will then follow their example. And then, too numerous and too powerful to be punished for a revolt, we shall proclaim a revolution, and declare that we will all sail back to our native havens unless we have the liberty of choosing our own hegemon."

"But," said the Lesbian who had before spoken, "the Athenians as yet have held back and declined our overtures, and without them we are not strong enough to cope with the Peloponnesian allies."

"The Athenians will be compelled to protect the Ionians, if the Ionians in sufficient force demand it," said Uliades. "For as we are nought without them, they are nought without us. Take the course suggested by Antagoras: I advise it. Ye know me, a plain man, but I speak not without warrant. And before the Spartans can either contemptuously dismiss our embassy or send us out another

general, the Ionian will be mistress of the Hellenic seas, and Sparta, the land of oligarchies, will no more have the power to oligarchize democracy. Otherwise, believe me, that power she has now from her hegemony, and that power whenever it suit her, she will use."

Uliades was chiefly popular in the fleet as a rough good seaman, as a blunt and somewhat vulgar humorist. But whenever he gave advice, the advice carried with it a weight not always bestowed upon superior genius, because, from the very commonness of his nature, he reached at the common sense and the common feelings of those whom he addressed. He spoke, in short, what an ordinary man thought and felt. He was a practical man, brave, but not over-audacious, not likely to run himself or others into idle dangers, and when he said he had a warrant for his advice, he was believed to speak from his knowledge of the course which the Athenian chiefs, Aristides and Cimon, would pursue if the plan recommended were actively executed.

"I am convinced," said the Lesbian. "And since all are grateful to Athens for that final stand against the Mede, to which all Greece owes her liberties, and since the chief of her armaments here is a man of so modest a virtue, and so clement a justice, as we all acknowledge in Aristides, fitting is it for us Ionians to constitute Athens the maritime sovereign of our race."

"Are ye all of that mind!" cried Antagoras, and was answered by the universal shout, "We are—all!" or if the shout was not universal, none heeded the few whom fear or prudence might keep silent. "All that remains then is to appoint the captain who shall hazard the first danger and make the first signal. For my part, as one of the electors, I give my vote for Uliades, and this is my ballot." He took from his temples the poplar wreath, and cast it into a silver vase on the tripod placed before him.

"Uliades by acclamation!" cried several voices.

"I accept," said the Ionian, "and as Ulysses, a prudent man, asked for a colleague in enterprises of danger, so I ask for a companion in the hazard I undertake, and I select Antagoras."

This choice received the same applauding acquiescence as that which had greeted the nomination of the Ionian.

And in the midst of the applause was heard without the sharp shrill sound of the Phrygian pipe.

"Comrades," said Antagoras, "ye hear the summons to our ships? Our boats are waiting at the steps of the quay, by the Temple of Neptune. Two sentences more, and then to sea. First, silence and fidelity; the finger to the lip, the right hand raised to Zeus Horkios. For a pledge, here is an oath. Secondly, be this the signal: whenever ye shall see Uliades and myself steer our triremas out of the line in which they may be marshalled, look forth and watch breathless, and the instant you perceive that beside our flags of Samos and Chios we hoist the ensign of Athens, draw off from your stations, and follow the wake of our keels, to the Athenian navy. Then as the Gods direct us. Hark, a second time shrills the fife."

CHAPTER V.

At the very hour when the Ionian captains were hurrying towards their boats, Pausanias was pacing his decks alone, with irregular strides, and through the cordage and the masts the starshine came fitfully on his troubled features. Long undecided he paused, as the waves sparkled to the stroke of oars, and beheld the boats of the feasters making towards the division of the fleet in which lay the navy of the isles. Farther on, remote and still, anchored the ships of Athens. He clenched his hand, and turned from the sight.

"To lose an empire," he muttered, "and without a struggle; an empire over yon mutinous rivals, over yon happy and envied Athens: an empire—where its limits?—if Asia puts her armies to my lead, why should not Asia be Hellenized, rather than Hellas be within the tribute of the Mede? Dull—dull stolid Sparta! methinks I could pardon the slavery thou inflictest on my life didst thou but leave unshackled my intelligence. But each vast scheme to be twarted, every thought for thine own aggrandizement beyond thy barren rocks met and inexorably baffled by a selfish aphorism, a cramping saw—'Sparta is wide

eno' for Spantans.'—'Ocean is the element of the fickle.'—'What matters the ascendancy of Athens?—it does not cross the Isthmus.'—'Venture nothing where I want nothing.' Why, this is the soul's prison! Ah, had I been born Athenian, I had never uttered a thought against my country. She and I would have expanded and aspired together."

Thus arguing with himself, he at length confirmed his resolve, and with a steadfast step entered his pavilion. There, not on broidered cushions, but by preference on the hard floor, without coverlid, lay Lysander calmly sleeping, his crimson warlike cloak, weather-stained, partially wrapt around him; no pillow to his head but his own right arm.

By the light of the high lamp that stood within the pavilion, Pausanias contemplated the slumberer.

"He says he loves me, and yet can sleep," he murmured bitterly. Then seating himself before a table he began to write, with slowness and precision, whether as one not accustomed to the task or weighing every word.

When he had concluded, he again turned his eyes to the sleeper. "How tranquil! Was my sleep ever as serene? I will not disturb him to the last."

The fold of the curtain was drawn aside, and Alcman entered noiselessly.

"Thou hast obeyed?" whispered Pausanias.

'Yes; the ship is ready, the wind favors. Hast thou decided?"

"I have," said Pausanias, with compressed lips.

He rose, and touched Lysander lightly, but the touch sufficed; the sleeper woke on the instant, casting aside slumber easily as a garment.

"My Pausanias," said the young Spartan, "I am at thine orders—shall I go? Alas! I read thine eye, and I shall leave thee in peril."

"Greater peril in the council of the Ephors and in the babbling lips of the hoary Gerontes, than amidst the meeting of armaments. Thou wilt take this letter to the Ephors. I have said in it but little; I have said that I confide my cause to thee. Remember that thou insist on the disgrace to me—the Heracleid, and through me to Sparta, that my recall would occason; remember that thou prove that my alleged harshness is but necessary to the discipline that preserves armies, and to the ascendancy of Spartan rule. And as to the idle tale of Persian prisoners escaped, why thou knowest how even the Ionians could make nothing of that charge Crowd all sail, strain every oar, no ship in the fleet so swift as that which bears thee. I care not for the few hours' start the talebearers have. Our Spartan forms are slow; they can scarce have an audience ere thou reach. The Gods speed and guard thee, beloved friend. With thee goes all the future of Pausanias."

Lysander grasped his hand in a silence more eloquent than words, and a tear fell on that hand which he clasped. "Be not ashamed of it," he said then, as he turned away, and, wrapping his cloak round his face, left the pavilion. Alcman followed, lowered a boat from the side, and in a few moments the Spartan and the Mothon were on the sea. The boat made to a vessel close at hand—a vessel builded in Cyprus, manned by Bithynians; its sails were all up, but it bore no flag. Scarcely had Lysander climbed the deck than it heaved to and fro, swaying as the anchor was drawn up, then, righting itself sprang forward, like a hound unleashed for the chase. Pausanias with folded arms stood on the deck of his own vessel, gazing after it, gazing long, till shooting far beyond the fleet, far towards the melting line between sea and sky, it grew less and lesser, and as the twilight dawned, it had faded into space.

The Heracleid turned to Alcman, who, after he had conveyed Lysander to the ship, had regained his master's side.

"What thinkest thou, Alcman, will be the result of all this?"

"The emancipation of the Helots," said the Mothon quietly. "The Athenians are too near thee, the Persians are too far. Wouldst thou have armies Sparta can neither give nor take away from thee, bind to thee a race by the strongest of human ties—make them see in thy power the necessary condition of their freedom."

Pausanias made no answer. He turned within his pavilion, and flinging himself down on the same spot from which he had disturbed Lysander, said, "Sleep here was so kind to him that it may linger where he left it. I have two hours yet for oblivion before the sun rise."

CHAPTER VI.

If we were enabled minutely to examine the mental organization of men who have risked great dangers, whether by the impulse of virtue or in the perpetration of crime, we should probably find therin a large preponderance of hope. By that preponderance we should account for those heroic designs which would annihilate prudence as a calculator, did not a sanguine confidence in the results produce special energies to achieve them, and thus create a prudence of its own, being as it were the self-conscious admeasurement of the diviner strength which justified the preterhuman spring. Nor less should we account by the same cause for that audacity which startles us in criminals on a colossal scale, which blinds them to the risks of detection, and often at the bar of justice, while the evidences that ensure condemnation are thickening round them, with the persuasion of acquittal or escape. Hope is thus alike the sublime inspirer or the arch corruptor; it is the foe of terror, the defier of consequences, the buoyant gamester which every loss doubles the stakes, with a firm hand rattles the dice, and, invoking ruin, cries within itself, "How shall I expend the gain?"

In the character, therefore, of a man like Pausanias, risking so much glory, daring so much peril, strong indeed must have been this sanguine motive-power of human action. Nor is a large and active development of hope incompatible with a temperament habitually grave and often profoundly melancholy. For hope itself is often engendered by discontent. A vigorous nature keenly susceptible to joy, and deprived of the possession of the joy it yearns for by circumstances that surround it in the present, is goaded on by its impatience and dissatisfaction; it hopes for the something it has not got, indifferent to the things it possesses, and saddened by the want which it experiences. And therefore it has been well said by philosophers, that real happiness would exclude desire; in other words, not only at the gates of hell, but at the porch of heaven, he who entered would leave hope behind him. For perfect bliss is but supreme content. And if content could say to itself, "But I hope for something more," it would destroy its own existence.

From his brief slumber the Spartan rose refreshed. The trumpets were sounding near him, and the very sound brightened his aspect, and animated his spirits.

Agreeably to orders he had given the night before, the anchor was raised, the rowers were on their benches, the libation to the Carnean Apollo, under whose special protection the ship was placed, had been poured forth, and with the rising sea and to the blare of trumpets the gorgeous trireme moved forth from the bay.

It moved, as the trumpets ceased, to the note of a sweeter, but not less exciting music. For, according to Hellenic custom, to the rowers was allotted a muscian, with whose harmony their oars, when first putting forth to sea, kept time. And on this occasion Alcman superseded the wonted performer by his own more popular song and the melody of his richer voice. Standing by the mainmast, and holding the large harp, which was stricken by the quill, its strings being deepened by a sounding-board, he chanted an Io Pæan to the Dorian god of light and poesy. The harp at stated intervals was supported by a burst of flutes, and the burthen of the verse was caught up by the rowers as in chorus. Thus, far and wide over the shining waves, went forth the hymn.

Io, Io Pæan! slowly. Song and oar must chime together:
Io, Io Pæan! by what title call Apollo?
Clarian! Xanthian? Boedromian?
Countless are thy names, Apollo.
Io Carnee! Io Carnee!
By the margent of Eurotas,
'Neath the shadows of Taygetus,
Thee the sons of Lacedæmon
Name Carneus. Io, Io!
Io Carnee! Io Cornee!

Io, Io Pæan! quicker. Song and voice must chime together:
Io Pæan! Io Pæan! King Apollo, Io, Io!
Io Carnee!
For thine altars do the seasons
Paint the tributary flowers,
Spring thy hyacinth restores,
Summer greets thee with the rose,
Autumn the blue Cyane mingles
With the coronals of corn,

And in every wreath thy laurel
Weaves its everlasting green.
Io Carnee! Io Carnee!
For the brows Apollo favors
Spring and winter does the laurel
Weave its everlasting green.

Io, Io Pæan! louder. Voice and oar must chime together:
For the brows Apollo favors
Even Ocean bears the laurel.
Io Carnee! Io Carnee!

Io, Io Pæan! stronger. Strong are those who win the laurel.

As the ship of the Spartan commander thus bore out to sea, the other vessels of the armament had been gradually forming themselves into a crescent, preserving still the order in which the allies maintained their several contributions to the fleet, the Athenian ships at the extreme end occupying the right wing, the Peloponnesians massed together at the left.

The Chian galleys adjoined the Samian; for Uliades and Antagoras had contrived that their ships should be close to each other, so that they might take counsel at any moment and act in concert.

And now when the fleet had thus opened its arms as it were to receive the commander, the great trireme of Pausanias began to veer round, and to approach the half-moon of the expanded armament. On it came, with its beaked prow, like a falcon swooping down on some array of the lesser birds.

From the stern hung a glided shield and a crimson pennon. The heavy armed soldier in their Spartan mail occupied the centre of the vessel, and the sun shone full upon their armor.

"By Pallas the guardian," said Cimon, "it is the Athenian vessels that the strategus honors with his first visit."

And indeed the Spartan galley now came alongside that of Aristides, the admiral of the Athenian navy.

The soldiers on board the former gave way on either side. And a murmur of admiration circled through the Athenian ship as Pausanias suddenly appeared. For, as if bent that day on either awing mutiny or conciliating the discontented, the Spartan chief had wisely laid aside the wondrous Median robes. He stood on her stern in the armor he had worn at Platæa, resting one hand upon his shield, which itself rested on the deck. His head alone was uncovered, his long sable locks gathered up into a knot, in the Spartan fashion, a crest as it were in itself to that lofty head. And so imposing were his whole air and carriage, that Cimon, gazing at him, muttered, "What profane hand will dare to rob that demigod of command?"

CHAPTER VII.

PAUSANIAS came on board the vessel of the Athenian admiral, attended by the five Spartan chiefs who have been mentioned before as the warlike companions assigned to him. He relaxed the haughty demeanor which had given so much displeasure, adopting a tone of marked courtesy. He spoke with high and merited praise of the seaman-like appearance of the Athenian crews, and the admirable build and equipment of their vessels.

"Pity only," said he, smiling, "that we have no Persians on the ocean now, and that instead of their visiting us we must go in search of them."

"Would that be wise on our part?" said Aristides. "Is not Greece large enough for Greeks?"

"Greece has not done growing," answered the Spartan; "and the Gods forbid that she should do so. When man ceases to grow in height he expands in bulk; when he stops there too, the frame begins to stoop, the muscles to shrink, the skin to shrivel, and decrepit old age steals on. I have heard it said of the Athenians that they think nothing done while aught remains to do. Is it not truly said, worthy son of Miltiades?"

Cimon bowed his head. "General, I cannot disavow the sentiment. But if Greece entered Asia, would it not be as a river that runs into a sea? it expands, and is merged."

"The river, Cimon, may lose the sweetness of its wave and take the brine of the sea. But the Greek can never lose the flavor of the Greek genius, and could he penetrate the universe, the universe would be Hellenized. But if, O Athenian chiefs, ye judge that we have now done all that is needful to protect Athens, and awe the Barbarian, ye must be longing to retire from the armament and return to your homes."

"When it is fit that we should return, we shall be recalled," said Aristides quietly.

"What, is your State so unerring in its judgment? Experience does not permit me to think so, for it ostracised Aristides."

"An honor," replied the Athenian, "that I did not deserve, but an action that, had I been the adviser of those who sent me forth, I should have opposed as too lenient. Instead of ostracising me, they should have cast both myself and Themistocles into the Barathrum."

"You speak with true Attic honor, and I comprehend that where, in commonwealths constituted like yours, party runs high, and the State itself is shaken, ostracism may be a necessary tribute to the very virtues that attract the zeal of a party and imperil the equality ye so prize. But what can compensate to a State for the evil of depriving itself of its greatest citizens?"

"Peace and freedom," said Aristides. "If you would have the young trees thrive you must not let one tree be so large as to overshadow them. Ah, general at Platæa," added the Athenian, in a benignant whisper, for the grand image before him moved his heart with a mingled feeling of generous admiration and prophetic pity, "ah, pardon me if I remind thee of the ring of Polycrates, and say that Fortune is a queen that requires tribute. Man should tremble most when most seemingly fortune-favored, and guard most against a fall when his rise is at the highest."

"But it is only at its highest flight that the eagle is safe from the arrow," answered Pausanias.

"And the nest the eagle has forgotten in her soaring is the more exposed to the spoiler."

"Well, my nest is in rocky Sparta; hardy the spoiler who ventures thither. Yet, to descend from these speculative comparisons, it seems that thou hast a friendly and meaning purpose in thy warnings. Thou knowest that there are in this armament men who grudge to me whatever I now owe to Fortune, who would topple me from the height to which I did not climb, but was led by the congregated Greeks, and who, while perhaps they are forging arrow-heads for the eagle, have sent to place poison and a snare in its distant nest. So the Nausicaa is on its voyage to Sparta, conveying to the Ephors complaints against me—complaints from men who fought by my side against the Mede."

"I have heard that a Cyprian vessel left the fleet yesterday, bound to Laconia. I have heard that it does bear men charged by some of the Ionians with representations unfavorable to the continuance of thy command. It bears none from me as the Nauarchus of the Athenians. But——"

"But—what?"

"But I have complained to thyself, Pausanias, in vain."

"Hast thou complained of late, and in vain?"

"Nay."

"Honest men may err; if they amend, do just men continue to accuse?"

"I do not accuse, Pausanias, I but imply that those who do may have a cause, but it will be heard before a tribunal of thine own countrymen, and doubtless thou has sent to the tribunal those who may meet the charge on thy behalf."

"Well," said Pausanias, still preserving his studied urbanity and lofty smile, "even Agamemnon and Archilles quarrelled, but Greece took Troy not the less. And at least, since Aristides does not denounce me, if I have committed even worse faults than Agamemnon, I have not made an enemy of Achilles. And if," he added after a pause, "if some of these Ionians, not waiting for the return of their envoys, openly mutiny, they must be treated as Thersites was." Then he hurried on quickly, for observing that Cimon's brow lowered, and his lips quivered, he desired to cut off all words that might lead to altercation.

"But I have a request to ask of the Athenian Nauarchus. Will you gratify myself and the fleet by putting your Athenian triremes into play? Your seamen are so famous for their manœuvres, that they might furnish us with sports of more grace and agility than do the Lydian dancers. Landsman though I be, no sight more glads mine eye than these sea lions of pine and brass, bounding under the yoke of their tamers. I presume not to give thee instructions what to perform. Who can dictate to the seamen of Salamis? But when your ships have played out their martial sport, let them exchange stations with the Peloponnesian vessels, and occupy for the present the left of the armament. Ye object not?"

"Place us where thou wilt, as was said to thee at Platæa," answered Aristides.

"I now leave ye to prepare, Athenians, and greet ye, saying, the Good to the Beautiful."

"A wondrous presence for a Greek com-

mander!" said Cimon, as Pausanias again stood on the stern of his own vessel, which moved off towards the ships of the islands.

"And no mean capacity," returned Aristides. "See you not his object in transplacing us?"

"Ha, truly; in case of mutiny on board the Ionian ships, he separates them from Athens. But woe to him if he thinks in his heart that an Ionian is a Thersites, to be silenced by the blow of a sceptre. Meanwhile let the Greeks see what manner of seamen are the Athenians. Methinks this game ordained to us is a contest before Neptune, and for a crown."

Pausanias bore right on towards the vessels from the Ægæn Isles. Their masts and prows were heavy with garlands, but no music sounded from their decks, no welcoming shout from their erews.

"Son of Cleombrotus," said the prudent Erasinidas, "sullen dogs bite. Unwise the stranger who trusts himself to their kennel. Pass not to those triremes; let the captains, if thou wantest them, come to thee."

"Pausanias replied, "Dogs fear the steady eye and spring at the recreant back. Helmsman, steer to yonder ship with the Olive tree on the Parasemon, and the image of Bacchus on the guardian standard. It is the ship of Antagoras the Chian captain.

Pausanias turned to his warlike Five. "This time, forgive me, I go alone." And before their natural Spartan slowness enabled them to combat this resolution, their leader was by the side of his rival, alone in the Chian vessel, and surrounded by his sworn foes.

"Antagoras," said the Spartan, "a Chian seaman's ship is his dearest home. I stand on thy deck as at thy hearth, and ask thy hospitality; a crust of thy honied bread, and a cup of thy Chian wine. For from thy ship I would see the Athenian vessels go through their nautical gymnastics.

The Chian turned pale and trembled; his vengeance was braved and foiled. He was powerless against the man who had trusted to his honor, and asked to break of his bread and drink of his cup. Pausanias did not appear to heed the embarrassment of his unwilling host, but turning round, addressed some careless words to the soldiers on the raised central platform, and then quietly seated himself, directing his eyes towards the Athenian ships. Upon these all the sails were now lowered. In nice Manœuvers the seamen preferred trusting to their oars. Presently one vessel started forth, and with a swiftness that seemed to increase at every stroke.

A table was brought upon deck and placed before Pausanias, and the slaves began to serve to him such light food as sufficed to furnish the customary meal of the Greeks in the earlier forenoon.

"But where is mine host?" asked the Spartan. "Does Antagoras himself not deign to share a meal with his guest?"

On receiving the message, Antagoras had no option but to come forward. The Spartan eyed him deliberately, and the young Chian felt with secret rage the magic of that commanding eye.

Pausanias motioned to him to be seated, making room beside himself. The Chian silently obeyed.

"Antagoras," said the Spartan in a low voice, "Thou art doubtless one of those who have already infringed the laws of Military discipline and obedience. Interrupt me not yet. A vessel without waiting my permission has left the fleet with accusations against me, thy commander; of what nature I am not even advised. Thou wilt scarcely deny that thou art one of those who sent forth the ship and shared in the accusations. Yet I had thought that if I had ever merited thine ill will, there had been reconciliation between us in the Council Hall. What has chanced since? Why shouldst thou hate me? Speak frankly; frankly have I spoken to thee."

"General," replied Antagoras, "there is no hegemony over men's hearts; thou sayest truly, as man to man, I hate thee. Wherefore? Because as man to man, thou standest between me and happiness. Because thou wooest, and canst only woo to dishonor, the virgin in whom I would seek the sacred wife."

Pausanias slightly recoiled, and the courtesy he had simulated, and which was essentially foreign to his vehement and haughty character, fell from him like a mask. For with the words of Antagoras, jealousy passed within him, and for the moment its agony was such that the Chian was avenged. But he was too habituated to the statelliness of self control to give vent to the rage that seized him. He only said with a whitened and

writhing lip, "Thou art right; all animostities may yield save those which a woman's eye can kindle. Thou hatest me—be it so—that is as man to man. But as officer to chieftian, I bid thee henceforth beware how thou givest me cause to set his foot on the head that lifts itself to the height of mine."

With that he rose, turned on his heel, and walked towards the stern, where he stood apart gazing on the Athenian triremes, which by this time were in the broad sea. And all the eyes in the fleet were turned towards that exhibition. For marvellous was the ease and beauty with which these ships went through their nautical movements; now as in chase of each other, now approaching as in conflict, veering off, darting aside, threading as it were a harmonious maze, gliding in and out, here, there, with the undulous celerity of the serpent. The admirable build of the ships; the perfect skill of the seamen; the noiseless docility and instinctive comprehension by which they seemed to seize and to obey the unforeseen signals of their Admiral—all struck the lively Greeks that beheldthe display, and universal was the thought if not the murmur. There was the power that should command the Grecian seas.

Pausanias was too much accustomed to the sway of masses not to have acquired that electric knowledge of what circles amongst them from breast to breast, to which habit gives the quickness of an instinct. He saw that he had committed an imprudence, and that in seeking to divert a mutiny, he had incurred a yet greater peril.

He returned to his own ship without exchanging another word with Antagoras, who had retired to the centre of the vessel, fearing to trust himself to a premature utterance of that defiance which the last warning of his chief provoked, and who was therefore arousing the soldiers to louder shouts of admiration at the Athenian skill.

Rowing back towards the wing occupied by the Peloponnesian allies, of whose loyalty he was assured, Pausanias then summoned on board their principal officer, and communicated to him his policy of placing the Ionians not only apart from the Athenians, but under the vigilance and control of Peloponnesian vessels in the immediate neighborhood. "Therefore," said he, "while the Athenians will occupy this wing, I wish you to divide yourselves; the Lacedæmonian ships will take the way the Athenians abandon, but the Corinthian triremes will place themselves between the ships of the Islands and the Athenians. I shall give further orders towards distributing the Ionian navy. And thus I trust either all chance of a mutiny is cut off, or it will be put down at the first outbreak. Now give orders to your men to take the places thus assigned to you. And having gratified the vanity of our friends the Athenians by their holiday evolutions, I shall send to thank and release them from the fatigue so gracefully borne."

All those with whom he here conferred, and who had no love for Athens or Ionia, readily fell into the plan suggested. Pausanias then despatched a Laconian vessel to the Athenian Admiral, with complimentary messages and orders to cease the manœuvres, and then heading the rest of the Laconian contingent, made slow and stately way towards the station deserted by the Athenians. But pausing once more before the vessels of the Isles, he despatched orders to their several commanders, which had the effect of dividing their array, and placing between them the powerful Corinthian service. In the orders of the vessels he forwarded for this change, he took especial care to dislocate the dangerous contiguity of the Samian and Chian triremes.

The sun was declining towards the west when Pausanias had marshalled the vessels he headed, at their new stations, and the Athenian ships were already anchored close and secured. But there was an evident commotion in that part of the fleet to which the Corinthian galleys had sailed. The Ionians had received with indignant murmurs the command which divided their strength. Under various pretexts each vessel delayed to move; and when the Corinthian ships came to take a vacant space, they found a formidable array—the soldiers on the platforms armed to the teeth. The confusion was visible to the Spartan chief; the loud hubbub almost reached to his ears. He hastened towards the place; but anxious to continue the gracious part he had so unwontedly played that day, he cleared his decks of their formidable hoplites, lest he might seem to meet menace by menace, and drafting them into other vessels, and accompanied only by his personal serving-men and rowers, he

put forth alone, the gilded shield and the red banner still displayed at his stern.

But as he was thus conspicuous and solitary, and midway in the space left between the Laconian and Ionian galleys, suddenly two ships from the latter darted forth, passed through the centre of the Corinthian contingent, and steered with the force of all their rowers, right towards the Spartan's ship.

"Surely," said Pausanias, "that is the Chian's vessel. I recognize the vine tree and the image of the Bromian god; and surely that other one is the Chimera under Uliades, the Samian. They come hither, the Ionian with them, to harangue against obedience to my orders."

"They come hither to assault us," exclaimed Erasinidas; "their beaks are right upon us."

He had scarcely spoken when the Chian's brass prow smote the gilded shield, and rent the red banner from its staff. At the same time, the Chimera, under Uliades, struck the right side of the Spartan ship and with both strokes the stout vessel reeled and dived. "Know, Spartan," cried Antagoras, from the platform in the midst of his soldiers, "that we Ionians hold together. He who would separate means to conquer us. We disown thy hegemony. If ye would seek us, we are with the Athenians.

With that the two vessels, having performed their insolent and daring feat, veered and shot off with the same rapidity with which they had come to the assault; and as they did so, hoisted the Athenian ensign over their own national standards. The instant that signal was given, from the other Ionian vessels, which had been evidently awaiting it, there came a simultaneous shout; and all, vacating their place and either gliding through or wheeling round the Corinthian galleys, steered towards the Athenian fleet.

The trireme of Pausanias, meanwhile, sorely damaged, part of its side rent away, and the water rushing in, swayed and struggled alone in great peril of sinking.

Instead of pursuing the Ionians, the Corinthian galleys made at once to the aid of the insulted commander.

"Oh," cried Pausanias, in powerless wrath, "oh, the accursed element! Oh that mine enemies had attacked me on the land!"

"How are we to act?" said Aristides.

"We are citizens of a Republic, in which the maiority govern," answered Cimon. "And the majority here tell us how we are to act. Hark to the shouts of our men, as they are opening way for their kinsmen of the Isles."

The sun sank, and with it sank the Spartan maritime ascendancy over Hellas. And from that hour in which the Samian and the Chian insulted the galley of Pausanias, if we accord weight to the authority on which Plutarch must have based his tale, commenced the brief and glorious sovereignty of Athens. Commence when and how it might, it was an epoch most signal in the records of the ancient world for its results upon a civilization to which as yet human foresight can predict no end.

BOOK FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

We pass from Byzantium, we are in Sparta. In the Archeion, or office of the Ephoralty, sate five men, all somewhat advanced in years. These constituted that stern and terrible authority which had gradually, and from unknown beginnings,* assumed a kind of tyranny over the descendants of Hercules themselves. They were the representatives of the Spartan people, elected without reference to rank or wealth,† and possessing jurisdiction not only over the Helots and Laconians, but over most of the magistrates. They could suspend or terminate any office, they could accuse the kings and bring them before a court in which they themselves were judges upon trial of life and death. They exercised control over the armies and the embassies sent abroad; and the king, at the head of his forces, was still bound to receive his instructions from this Council of Five. Their duty, in fact, was to act as a check upon the kings, and they were the representatives of that Nobility which embraced the whole Spartan people, in contradistinction to the Laconians and Helots.

The conference in which they were engaged seemed to rivet their most earnest attention. And as the presiding Ephor continued the observations he addressed to them, the rest listened with profound and almost breathless silence.

The speaker, named Periclides, was older than the others. His frame, still upright and sinewy, was yet lean almost to emaciation, his face sharp, and his dark eyes gleamed with a cunning and sinister light under his grey brows.

"If," said he, "we are to believe these Ionians, Pausanias meditates some deadly injury to Greece. As for the complaints of his arrogance, they are to be received with due caution. Our Spartans, accustomed to the peculiar discipline of the Laws of Ægimius, rarely suit the humors of Ionians and innovators. The question to consider is not whether he has been too imperious towards Ionians who were but the other day subjected to the Mede, but whether he can make the command he received from Sparta menacing to Sparta herself. We lend him iron, he hath holpen himself to gold."

"Besides the booty at Platæa, they say that he has amassed much plunder at Byzantium," said Zeuxidamus; one of the Ephors, after a pause.

Periclides looked hard at the speaker, and the two men exchanged a significant glance.

"For my part," said a third, a man of a severe but noble countenance, the father of Lysander, and, what was not usual with the Ephors, belonging to one of the highest families of Sparta, "I have always held that Sparta should limit its policy to self-defence; that, since the Persian invasion is over, we have no business with Byzantium. Let the busy Athenians obtain if they will the empire of the sea. The sea is no province of ours. All intercourse with foreigners, Asiatics, and Ionians, enervates our men and corrupts our generals. Recall Pausanias—recall our Spartans. I have said."

"Recall Pausanias first," said Periclides,

* K. O. Müller (Dorians), Book 3, c. 7, §2. According to Aristotle, Cicero, and others, the Ephorality was founded by Theopompus, subsequently to the mythical time of Lycurgus. To Lycurgus itself it is referred by Xenophon and Herodotus. Müller considers rightly that, though an ancient Doric institution, it was incompatible with the primitive constitution of Lycurgus, and had gradually acquired its peculiar character by causes operating on the Spartan State alone.

† Aristot. Pol. ii.

"and we shall then hear the truth, and decide what is best to be done."

"If he has medised, if he has conspired against Greece, let us accuse him to the death," said Agesilaus, Lysander's father.

"We may accuse, but it rests not with us to sentence," said Periclides disapprovingly.

"And," said a fourth Ephor, with a visible shudder, "what Spartan dare counsel sentence of death to the descendant of the Gods?"

"I dare," replied Agesilaus, "but provided only that the descendant of the Gods had counselled death to Greece. And for that reason, I say that I would not, without evidence the clearest, even harbor the thought that a Heracleid could meditate treason to his country."

Periclides felt the reproof and bit his lips.

"Besides," observed Zeuxidamus, "fines enrich the State."

Periclides nodded approvingly.

As expression of lofty contempt passed over the brow and lip of Agesilaus. But with national self-command, he replied gravely, and with equal laconic brevity, "If Pausanias hath committed a trivial error that a fine can expiate, so be it. But talk not of fines till ye acquit him of all treasonable connivance with the Mede."

At that moment an officer entered on the conclave, and approaching the presiding Ephor, whispered in his ear.

"This is well," exclaimed Periclides aloud. "A messenger from Pausanias himself. Your son Lysander has just arrived from Byzantium."

"My son!" exclaimed Agesilaus eagerly, and then checking himself, added calmly, "That is a sign no danger to Sparta threatened Byzantium when he left."

"Let him be admitted," said Periclides.

Lysander entered; and pausing at a little distance from the council board, inclined his head submissively to the Ephors; save a rapid interchange of glances, no separate greeting took place between son and father.

"Thou art welcome," said Periclides. "Thou hast done thy duty since thou hast left the city. Virgins will praise thee as the brave man; age, more sober, is contented to say thou hast upheld the Spartan name. And thy father without shame may take thy hand."

A warm flush spread over the young man's face. He stepped forward with a quick step, his eyes beaming with joy. Calm and stately, his father rose, clasped the extended hand, then releasing his own, placed it an instant on his son's bended head, and reseated himself in silence.

"Thou camest straight from Pausanias!" said Periclides.

Lysander drew him from his vest the despatch entrusted to him, and gave it to the presiding Ephor. Periclides half rose as if to take with more respect what had come from the hand of the son of Hercules.

"Withdraw, Lysander," he said, "and wait without while we deliberate on the contents herein."

Lysander obeyed, and returned to the outer chamber.

Here he was instantly surrounded by eager though not noisy groups. Some in that chamber were waiting on business connected with the civil jurisdiction of the Ephors. Some had gained admittance for the purpose of greeting their brave countryman, and hearing news of the distant camp from one who had so lately quitted the great Pausanias. For men could talk without restraint of their General, though it was but with reserve and indirectly that they slid in some furtive question as to the health and safety of a brother or a son.

"My heart warms to be amongst ye again," said the simple Spartan youth. "As I came thro' the defiles from the sea-coast, and saw on the height the gleam from the old Temple of Pallas Chalcioecus, I said to myself, 'Blessed be the Gods that ordained me to live with Spartans or die with Sparta!"

"Thou wilt see how much we shall make of thee, Lysander," cried a Spartan youth a little younger than himself, one of the superior tribe of the Hylleans. "We have heard of thee at Platæa. It is said that had Pausanias not been there thou wouldst have been called the bravest Greek in the armament."

"Hush," said Lysander, "thy few years excuse thee, young friend. Save our General, we were all equals in the day of battle.

"So thinks not my sister Percalus," whispered the youth archly; "scold her as thou dost me, if thou dare."

Lysander colored, and replied in a voice that slightly trembled, "I cannot hope that

thy sister interests herself in me. Nay, when I left Sparta, I thought——" He checked himself.

"Thought what?"

"That among those who remained behind, Percalus might find her betrothed long before I returned."

"Among those who remained *behind!* Percalus! How meanly thou must think of her."

Before Lysander could utter the eager assurance that he was very far from thinking meanly of Percalus, the other bystanders, impatient at this whispered colloquy, seized his attention with a volley of questions, to which he gave but curt and not very relevant answers, so much had the lad's few sentences disturbed the calm tenor of his existing self-possession. Nor did he quite regain his presence of mind until he was once more summoned into the presence of the Ephors.

CHAPTER II.

THE communication of Pausanias had caused an animated discussion in the Council, and led to a strong division of opinion. But the faces of the Ephors, rigid and composed, revealed nothing to guide the sagacity of Lysander, as he re-entered the chamber. He himself, by a strong effort, had recovered the disturbance into which the words of the boy had thrown his mind, and he stood before the Ephors intent upon the object of defending the name and fulfilling the commands of his chief. So reverent and grateful was the love that he bore to Pausanias, that he scarcely permitted himself even to blame the deviations from Spartan austerity which he secretly mourned in his mind; and as to the grave guilt of treason to the Hellenic cause, he had never suffered the suspicion of it to rest upon an intellect that only failed to the penetrating where its sight was limited by discipline and affection. He felt that Pausanias had entrusted to him his defence, and though he would fain, in his secret heart, have beheld the Regent once more in Sparta, yet he well knew that it was the duty of obedience and friendship to plead against the sentence of recall which was so dreaded by his chief.

With all his thoughts collected towards that end, he stood before the Ephors, modest in demeanor, vigilant in purpose.

"Lysander," said Periclides, after a short pause, "we know thy affection to the Regent, thy chosen friend; but we know also thy affection for thy native Sparta; where the two may come into conflict, it is, and it must be, thy country which will claim the preference. We charge thee, by virtue of our high powers and authority, to speak the truth on the questions we shall address to thee, without fear or favor."

Lysander bowed his head. "I am in presence of Sparta my mother and Agesilaus my father. They know that I was not reared to lie to either."

"Thou say'st well. Now answer. Is it true that Pausanias wears the robes of the Mede?"

"It is true."

"And has he stated to thee his reasons?"

"Not only to me but to others."

"What are they?"

"That in the mixed and half medise population of Byzantium, splendor of attire has become so associated with the notion of sovereign power, that the Eastern dress and attributes of pomp are esssential to authority; and that men bow before his tiara who might rebel against the helm and the horsehair. Outward signs have a value, O Ephors, according to the notions men are now brought up to attach to them."

"Good," said one of the Ephors. "There is in this departure from our habits, be it right or wrong, no sign then of connivance with the Barbarian."

"Connivance is a thing secret and concealed, and shuns all outward signs."

"But," said Periclides, "what say the other Spartan Captains to this vain fashion, which savors not of the Laws of Ægimius?"

"The first law of Ægimius commands us to fight and to die for the king or the chief who has kingly sway. The Ephors may blame, but the soldier must not question?"

"Thou speakest boldly for so young a man," said Periclides harshly.

"I was commanded to speak the truth."

"Has Pausanias entrusted the command of Byzantium to Gongylus the Eretrian, who already holds four provinces under Xerxes?"

"He has done so."

"Know you the reason for that selection?"

"Pausanias says that the Eretrian could not more show his faith to Hellas than by resigning Eastern satrapies so vast."

"Has he resigned them?"

"I know not; but I presume that when the Persian King knows that the Eretrian is leagued against him with the other Captains of Hellas, he will assign the satrapies to another."

"And is it true that the Persian prisoners, Ariamanes and Datis, have escaped from the custody of Gongylus!"

"It is true. The charge against Gongylus for that error was heard in a couucil of confederate captains, and no proof against him was brought forward. Cimon was entrusted with the pursuit of the prisoners. Pausanias himself sent forth fifty scouts on Thessalian horses. The prisoners were not discovered."

"Is it true," said Zeuxidamus, "that Pausanias has amassed much plunder at Byzantium?"

"What he has won as a conqueror was assigned to him by common voice, but he has spent largely out of his own resources in securing the Greek sway at Byzantium."

There was a silence. None liked to question the young soldier farther: none liked to put the direct question, whether or not the Ionian Ambassadors could have cause for suspecting the descendant of Hercules of harm against the Greeks. At length Agesilaus said: "I demand the word, and I claim the right to speak plainly. My son is young, but he is of the blood of Hyllus.

"Son—Pausanias is dear to thee. Man soon dies: man's name lives for ever. Dear to thee if Pausanias is, dearer must be his name. In brief, the Ionian Ambassadors complain of his arrogance towards the Confederates; they demand his recall. Cimon has addressed a private letter to the Spartan host, with whom he lodged here, intimating that it may be best for the honor of Pausanias, and for our weight with the allies, to hearken to the Ionian Embassy. It is a grave question, therefore, whether we should recall the Regent or refuse to hear these charges. Thou art fresh from Byzantium: thou must know more of this matter than we. Loose thy tongue, put aside equivocation. Say thy mind, it is for us to decide afterwards what is our duty to the State."

"I thank thee, my father," said Lysander, coloring deeply at a compliment paid rarely to one so young, "and thus I answer thee:

"Pausanias, in seeking to enforce discipline and preserve the Spartan supremacy, was at first somewhat harsh and severe to these Ionians, who had indeed but lately emancipated themselves from the Persian yoke, and who were little accustomed to steady rule. But of late he has been affable and courteous, and no complaint was urged against him for austerity at the time when this embassy was sent to you. Wherefore was it then sent! Partly, it may be, from motives of private hate, not public zeal, but partly because the Ionian race sees with reluctance and jealousy the Hegemony of Sparta. I would speak plainly. It is not for me to say whether ye will or not that Sparta should retain the maritime supremacy of Hellas, but if ye do will it, ye will not recall Pausanias. No other than the Conqueror of Platæa has a chance of maintaining that authority. Eager would the Ionians be upon any pretext, false or frivolous, to rid themselves of Pausanias.

"Artfully willing would be the Athenians in especial that ye listened to such pretexts; for, Pausanias gone, Athens remains and rules. On what belongs to the policy of the State it becomes not me to proffer a word, O Ephors. In what I have said I speak what the whole armament thinks and murmurs. But this I may say as soldier to whom the honor of his chief is dear. The recall of Pausanias may or may not be wise as a public act, but it will be regarded throughout all Hellas as a personal affront to your general; it will lower the royalty of Sparta, it will be an insult to the blood of Hercules. Forgive me, O venerable magistrates. I have fought by the side of Pausanias, and I cannot dare to think that the great Conqueror of Platæa, the man who saved Hellas from the Mede, the man who raised Sparta on that day to a renown which penetrated the farthest corners of the East, will receive from you other return than fame and glory. And fame and glory will surely make that proud spirit doubly Spartan."

Lysander paused, breathing hard and coloring deeply—annoyed with himself for a speech

of which both the length and the audacity were much more Ionian than Spartan.

The Ephors looked at each other, and there was again silence.

"Son of Agesilaus," said Periclides, "thou hast proved thy Lacedæmonian virtues too well, and too high and general is thy repute amongst our army, as it is borne to our ears, for us to doubt thy purity and patriotism; otherwise, we might fear that whilst thou speakest in some contempt of Ionian wolves, thou hadst learned the arts of Ionian Agoras. But enough: thou art dismissed. Go to thy home; glad the eyes of thy mother; enjoy the honors thou wilt find awaiting thee amongst thy coevals. Thou wilt learn later whether thou return to Byzantium or whether a better field for thy valor may not be found in the nearer war with which Arcadia threatens us."

As soon as Lysander left the chamber, Agesilaus spoke:—

"Ye will pardon me, Ephors, if I bade my son speak thus boldly. I need not say I am no vain, foolish father, desiring to raise the youth above his years. But making allowance for his partiality to the Regent, ye will grant that he is a fair specimen of our young soldiery. Probably, as he speaks, so will our young men think. To recall Pausanias is to disgrace our general. Ye have my mind. If the Regent be guilty of the darker charges insinuated—correspondence with the Persian against Greece—I know but one sentence for him—Death. And it is because I would have ye consider well how dread is such a charge, and how awful such a sentence, that I entreat ye not lightly to entertain the one unless ye are prepared to meditate the other. As for the maritime supremacy of Sparta, I hold, as I have held before, that it is not within our councils to strive for it; it must pass from us. We may surrender it later with dignity; if we recall our general on such complaints, we lose it with humiliation."

"I agree with Agesilaus," said another, "Pausanias is an Heracleid; my vote shall not insult him."

"I agree too with Agesilaus," said a third Ephor; "not because Pausanias is the Heracleid, but because he is the victorious general who demands gratitude and respect from every true Spartan."

"Be it so," said Periclides, who, seeing himself thus outvoted in the council, covered his disappointment with the self-control habitual to his race. "But be we in no hurry to give these Ionian legates their answer to-day. We must deliberate well how to send such a reply as may be most conciliating and prudent. And for the next few days we have an excuse for delay in the religious ceremonials due to the venerable Divinity of Fear, which commence to-morrow. Pass we to the other business before us; there are many whom we have kept waiting. Agesilaus, thou art excused from the public table to-day if thou wouldst sup with thy brave son at home."

"Nay," said Agesilaus, "my son will go to his pheidition and I to mine—as I did on the day when I lost my first-born."

CHAPTER III.

On quitting the Hall of the Ephors, Lysander found himself at once on the Spartan Agora, wherein that Hall was placed. This was situated on the highest of the five hills over which the unwalled city spread its scattered population, and was popularly called the Tower. Before the eyes of the young Spartan rose the statues, rude and antique, of Latona, the Pythian Apollo, and his sister Artemis—venerable images to Lysander's early associations. The place which they consecrated was called Chorus; for there, in honor of Apollo, and in the most pompous of all the Spartan festivals, the young men were accustomed to lead the sacred dance. The Temple of Apollo himself stood a little in the back-ground, and near to it that of Hera. But more vast than any image of a god was a colossal statue which represented the Spartan people; while on a still loftier pinnacle of the hill than that table-land which enclosed the Agorá—dominating as it were, the whole city—soared into the bright blue sky the sacred Chalcicœcus, or Temple of the Brazen Pallas, darkening with its shadow another fane towards the left dedicated to the Lacedæmonian Muses, and receiving a gleam on the right from the brazen statue of Zeus, which was said by tradition to have been made by a disciple of Dædalus himself.

But short time had Lysander to note undisturbed the old familiar scenes. A crowd of

his early friends had already collected round the doors of the Archeion, and rushed forward to greet and welcome him. The Spartan coldness and austerity of social intercourse vanished always before the enthusiasm created by the return to his native city of a man renowned for valor; and Lysander's fame had come back to Sparta before himself. Joyously, and in triumph, the young men bore away their comrade. As they passed through the centre of the Agora, where assembled the various merchants and farmers, who, under the name of Periœci, carried on the main business of the Laconian mart, and were often much wealthier than the Spartan citizens, trade ceased its hubbub; all drew near to gaze on the young warrior; and now, as they turned from the Agora, a group of eager women met them on the road, and shrill voices exclaimed: "Go, Lysander, thou hast fought well—go and choose for thyself the maiden that seems to thee the fairest. Go, marry and get sons for Sparta."

Lysander's steps seemed to tread on air, and tears of rapture stood in his downcast eyes. But suddenly all the voices hushed; the crowds drew back; his friends halted. Close by the great Temple of Fear, and coming from some place within its sanctuary, there approached towards the Spartan and his comrades a majestic woman—a woman of so grand a step and port that, though her veil as yet hid her face, her form alone sufficed to inspire awe. All knew her by her gait: all made way for Alithea, the widow of a king, the mother of Pausanias the Regent. Lysander, lifting his eyes from the ground, impressed by the hush around him, recognized the form as it advanced slowly towards him, and, leaving his comrades behind, stepped forward to salute the mother of his chief. She, thus seeing him, turned slightly aside, and paused by a rude building of immemorial antiquity which stood near the temple. That building was the tomb of the mythical Orestes, whose bones were said to have been interred there by the command of the Delphian Oracle. On a stone at the foot of the tomb sate calmly down the veiled woman, and waited the approach of Lysander. When he came near, and alone—all the rest remaining aloof and silent—Alithea removed her veil, and a countenance grand and terrible as that of Fate lifted its rigid looks to the young Spartan's eyes. Despite her age—for she had passed into middle life before she had borne Pausanias—Alithea retained all the traces of a marvellous and almost preter-human beauty. But it was not the beauty of woman. No softness sate on those lips; no love beamed from those eyes. Stern, inexorable—not a fault in her grand proportions—the stoutest heart might have felt a throb of terror as the eye rested upon that pitiless and imposing front. And the deep voice of the Spartan warrior had a slight tremor in its tone as it uttered its respectful salutation.

"Draw near, Lysander. What sayest thou of my son?"

"I left him well, and——"

"Does a Spartan mother first ask of the bodily health of an absent man-child? By the tomb of Orestes and near the Temple of Fear, a king's widow asks a Spartan soldier what he says of a Spartan chief."

"All Hellas," replied Lysander, recovering his spirit, "might answer thee best, Alithea. For all Hellas proclaimed that the bravest man at Platæa was thy son, my chief."

"And where did my son, thy chief, learn to boast of bravery? They tell me he inscribed the offerings to the Gods with his name as the victor of Platæa—the battle won not by one man but assembled Greece. The inscription that dishonors him by its vainglory will be erased. To be brave is nought. Barbarians may be brave. But to dedicate bravery to his native land becomes a Spartan. He who is everything against a foe should count himself as nothing in the service of his country."

Lysander remained silent under the gaze of those fixed and imperious eyes.

"Youth," said Alithea, after a short pause, "if thou returnest to Byzantium, say this from Alithea to thy chief: 'From thy childhood, Pausanias, has thy mother feared for thee; and at the Temple of Fear did she sacrifice when she heard that thou wert victorious at Platæa; for in thy heart are the seeds of arrogance and pride; and victory to thine arms may end in ruin to thy name. And ever since that day does Alithea haunt the precincts of that temple. Come back and be Spartan, as thine ancestors were before thee, and Alithea will rejoice and think the Gods have heard her. But if thou seest with'n

thyself one cause why thy mother should sacrifice to Fear, lest her son should break the laws of Sparta, or sully his Spartan name, humble thyself, and mourn that thou didst not perish at Platæa. By a temple and from a tomb I send thee warning.' Say this I have done; join thy friends."

Again the veil fell over the face, and the figure of the woman remained seated at the tomb long after the procession had passed on, and the mirth of young voices was again released.

CHAPTER IV.

THE group that attended Lysander continued to swell as he mounted the acclivity on which his parental home was placed. The houses of the Spartan proprietors were at that day not closely packed together as in the dense population of commercial towns. More like the villas of a suburb, they lay a little apart, on the unequal surface of the rugged ground, perfectly plain and unadorned, covering a large space with ample court-yards, closed in, in front of the narrow streets. And still was in force the primitive law which ordained that doorways should be shaped only by the saw, and the ceilings by the axe; but in contrast to the rudeness of the private houses, at every opening in the street were seen the Doric pillars or graceful stairs of a temple; and high over all dominated the Tower-hill, or Acropolis, with the antique fane of Pallas Chalciœcus.

And so, loud and joyous, the procession bore the young warrior to the threshold of his home. It was an act of public honor to his fair repute and his proven valor. And the Spartan felt as proud of that unceremonies attendance as ever did Roman chief sweeping under arches of triumph in the curule car.

At the threshold of the door stood his mother—for the tidings of his coming had preceded him—and his little brothers and sisters. His step quickened at the sight of these beloved faces.

"Bound forward, Lysander," said one of the train; "thou hast won the right to thy mother's kiss."

"But fail us not at the pheidition before sunset," cried another. "Every one of the obe will send his best contribution to the feast to welcome thee back. We shall have a rare banquet of it."

And so, as his mother drew him within the doors, his arm round her waist, and the children clung to his cloak, to his knees, or sprung up to claim his kiss, the procession set up a kind of chaunted shout, and left the warrior in his home.

"Oh, this is joy, joy!" said Lysander, with sweet tears in his eyes, as he sat in the women's apartment, his mother by his side, and the little ones round him. "Where, save in Sparta, does a man love a home?"

And this exclamation, which might have astonished an Ionian—seeing how much the Spartan civilians merged the individual in the state—was yet true, where the Spartan was wholly Spartan, where, by habit and association, he had learned to love the severities of the existence that surrounded him, and where the routine of duties which took him from his home, whether for exercises or the public tables, made yet more precious the hours of rest and intimate intercourse with his family. For the gay pleasures and lewd resorts of other Greek cities were not known to the Spartan. Not for him were the cook-shops and baths and revels of Ionian idlers. When the State ceased to claim him, he had nothing but his Home.

As Lysander thus exclaimed, the door of the room had opened noiselessly, and Agesilaus stood unperceived at the entrance, and overheard his son. His face brightened singularly at Lysander's words. He came forward and opened his arms.

"Embrace me now, my boy! my brave boy! embrace me now! The Ephors are not here."

Lysander turned, sprang up, and was in his father's arms.

"So thou art not changed. Byzantium has not spoiled thee. Thy name is uttered with praise unmixed with fear. All Persia's gold, all the great king's Satrapies could not medise my Lysander. Ah," continued the father, turning to his wife, "who could have predicted the happiness of this hour? Poor child! he was born sickly. Hera had already given us more sons than we could provide for, ere our lands were increased by the death of thy childless relatives. Wife, wife! when the family

council ordained him to be exposed on Taygetus, when thou didst hide thyself lest thy tears should be seen, and my voice trembled as I said, 'Be the laws obeyed,' who could have guessed that the gods would yet preserve him to be the pride of our house? Blessed be Zeus the saviour and Hercules the warrior!"

"And," said the mother, "blessed be Pausanias, the descendant of Hercules, who took the forlorn infant to his father's home, and who has reared him now to be the example of Spartan youths."

"Ah," said Lysander, looking up into his father's eyes, "if I can ever be worthy of your love, O my father, forget not I pray thee, that it is to Pausanias I owe life, home, and a Spartan's glorious destiny."

"I forget it not," answered Agesilaus, with a mournful and serious expression of countenance. "And on this I would speak to thee Thy mother must spare thee awhile to me. Come. I lean on thy shoulder instead of my staff."

Agesilaus led his son into the large hall, which was the main chamber of the house; and pacing up and down the wide and solitary floor, questioned him closely as to the truth of the stories respecting the Regent which had reached the Ephors.

"Thou must speak with naked heart to me," said Agesilaus; "for I tell thee that, if I am Spartan, I am also man and father; and I would serve him who saved thy life and taught thee how to fight for thy country, in every way that may be lawful to a Spartan and a Greek."

Thus addressed, and convinced of his father's sincerity, Lysander replied with ingenuous and brief simplicity. He granted that Pausanias had exposed himself with a haughty imprudence, which it was difficult to account for, to the charges of the Ionians. "But," he added, with that shrewd observation which his affection for Pausanias rather than his experience of human nature had taught him—"But we must remember that in Pausanias we are dealing with no ordinary man. If he has faults of judgment, which a Spartan rarely commits, he has, O my father, a force of intellect and passion which a Spartan as rarely knows. Shall I tell you the truth? Our State is too small for him. But would it not have been too small for Hercules? Would the laws of Ægimius have permitted Hercules to perform his labors and achieve his conquests? This vast and fiery nature suddenly released from the cramps of our customs, which Pausanias never in his youth regarded save as galling, expands itself, as an eagle long caged would outspread its wings."

"I comprehend," said Agesilaus thoughtfully, and somewhat sadly. "There have been moments in my own life when I regarded Sparta as a prison. In my early manhood I was sent on a mission to Corinth. Its pleasures, its wild tumult of gay licence, dazzled and inebriated me. I said, 'This is to live.' I came back to Sparta sullen and discontented. But then, happily, I saw thy mother at the festival of Diana—we loved each other, we married—and when I was permitted to take her to my home, I became sobered and was a Spartan again. I comprehend. Poor Pausanias! But luxury and pleasure, though they charm awhile, do not fill up the whole of a soul like that of our Heracleid. From these he may recover; but Ambition—that is the true liver of Tantalus, and grows larger under the beak that feeds on it. What is his ambition, if Sparta be too small for him?"

"I think his ambition would be to make Sparta as big as himself."

Agesilaus stroked his chin musingly.

"And how?"

"I cannot tell, I can only guess. But the Persian war, if I may judge by what I hear and see, cannot roll away and leave the boundaries of each Greek State the same. Two States now stand forth prominent, Athens and Sparta. Themistocles and Cimon aim at making Athens the head of Hellas. Perhaps Pausanias aims to effect for Sparta what they would effect for Athens."

"And what thinkest thou of such a scheme?"

"Ask me not. I am too young, too inexperienced, and perhaps too Spartan to answer rightly."

"Too Spartan, because thou art too covetous of power for Sparta."

"Too Spartan, because I may be too anxious to keep Sparta what she is."

Agesilaus smiled. "We are of the same mind, my son. Think not that the rocky defiles which enclose us shut out from our minds all the ideas that new circumstance strikes from Time.

I have meditated on what thou sayest Pausanias may scheme. It is true that the invasion of the Mede must tend to raise up one State in Greece to which the others will look for a head. I have asked myself, can Sparta be that State? and my reason tells me, No. Sparta is lost if she attempt it. She may become something else, but she cannot be Sparta. Such a State must become maritime, and depend on fleets. Our inland situation forbids this. True we have ports in which the Perioeci flourish; but did we use them for a permanent policy the Perioeci must become our masters. There five villages would be abandoned for a mart on the sea-shore. This mother of men would be no more. A State that so aspires must have ample wealth at its command. We have none. We might raise tribute from other Greek cities, but for that purpose we must have fleets again, to overawe and compel, for no tribute will be long voluntary. A state that would be the active governor of Hellas must have lives to spare in abundance. We have none, unless we always do hereafter as we did at Platæa, raise an army of Helots—seven Helots to one Spartan. How long, if we did so, would the Helots obey us, and meanwhile how would our lands be cultivated? A State that would be the centre of Greece, must cultivate all that can charm and allure strangers. We banish strangers, and what charms and allures them would womanize us. More than all, a State that would obtain the sympathies of the turbulent Hellenic populations must have the most popular institutions. It must be governed by a Demus. We are an Oligarchic Aristocracy—a disciplined camp of warriors, not a licentious Agora. Therefore, Sparta cannot assume the head of a Greek Confederacy except in the rare seasons of actual war; and the attempt to make her the head of such a confederacy would cause changes so repugnant to our manners and habits, that it would be fraught with destruction to him who made the attempt, or to us if he succeeded. Wherefore, to sum up, the ambition of Pausanias is in this impracticable, and must be opposed."

"And Athens," cried Lysander, with a slight pang of natural and national jealousy, "Athens then must wrest from Pausanias the hegemony he now holds for Sparta, and Athens must be what the Athenian ambition covets."

"We cannot help it—she must; but can it last?—Impossible. And woe to her if she ever comes in contact with the bronze of Laconian shields. But in the meanwhile what is to be done with this great and awful Heracleid? They accuse him of medising, of secret conspiracy with Persia itself. Can that be possible?"

"If so, it is but to use Persia on behalf of Sparta. If he would subdue Greece, it is not for the king, it is for the race of Hercules."

"Ay, ay, ay," cried Agesilaus, shading his face with his hand. "All becomes clear to me now. Listen. Did I openly defend Pausanias before the Ephors, I should injure his cause. But when they talk of his betraying Hellas and Sparta, I place before them nakedly and broadly their duty if that charge be true. For if true, O my son, Pausanias must die as criminals die."

"Die — criminal — an Heracleid — king's blood—the victor of Platæa—my friend Pausanias!"

"Rather he than Sparta. What sayest thou?"

"Neither, neither," exclaimed Lysander, wringing his hands—"impossible both."

"Impossible both, be it so, I place before the Ephors the terrors of accrediting that charge, in order that they may repudiate it. For the lesser ones it matters not; he is in no danger there, save that of fine. And his gold," added Agesilaus with a curved lip of disdain, "will both condemn and save him. For the rest I would spare him the dishonor of being publicly recalled, and to say truth, I would save Sparta the peril she might incur from his wrath, if she inflicted on him that slight. But mark me, he himself must resign his command, voluntarily, and return to Sparta. Better so for him and his pride, for he cannot keep the hegemony against the will of the Ionians, whose fleet is so much larger than ours, and it is to his gain if his successor lose it, not he. But better, not only for his pride, but for his glory and his name, that he should come from these scenes of fierce temptation, and, since birth made him a Spartan, learn here again to conform to what he cannot change. I have spoken thus plainly to thee. Use the words I have uttered as thou best may, after thy return to Pausanias, which I will strive to make speedy. But while we talk

there goes on danger—danger still of his abrupt recall—for there are those who will seize every excuse for it. Enough of these grave matters; the sun is sinking towards the west, and thy companions await thee at thy feast; mine will be eager to greet me on thy return, and thy little brothers, who go with me to my pheidition, will hear thee so praised that they will long for the crypteia—long to be men, and find some future Platæa for themselves. May the gods forbid it! War is a terrible unsettler. Time saps States as a tide the cliff. War is an inundation, and when it ebbs, a landmark has vanished."

CHAPTER V.

NOTHING so largely contributed to the peculiar character of Spartan society as the uniform custom of taking the princpal meal at a public table. It conduced to four objects: the precise status of aristocracy, since each table was formed according to title and rank, —equality among aristocrats, since each at the same table was held the equal of the other —military union, for as they feasted so they fought, being formed into divisions in the field according as they messed together at home; and lastly, that sort of fellowship in public opinion which intimate associations amongst those of the same rank and habit naturally occasions. These tables in Sparta were supplied by private contributions; each head of a family was obliged to send a certain portion at his own cost, and according to the number of his children. If his fortune did not allow him to do this, he was excluded from the public tables. Hence a certain fortune was indispensable to the pure Spartan, and this was one reason why it was permitted to expose infants, if the family threatened to be too large for the father's means. The general arrangements were divided into syssitia, according, perhaps, to the number of families, and correspondent to the divisions or obes acknowledged by the State. But these larger sections were again subdivided into companies or clubs of fifteen, vacancies being filled up by ballot; but one vote could exclude. And since, as we have said, the companies were marshalled in the field according to their association at the table, it is clear that fathers of grave years and of high station (station in Sparta increased with years) could not have belonged to the same table as the young men, their sons. Their boys under a certain age they took to their own pheiditia, where the children sat upon a lower bench, and partook of the simplest dishes of the fare.

Though the cheer of these public tables was habitually plain, yet upon occasion it was enriched by presents to the after-course, of game and fruit.

Lysander was received by his old comrades with that cordiality in which was mingled for the first time a certain manly respect, due to feats in battle, and so flattering to the young.

The prayer to the Gods, correspondent to the modern grace, and the pious libations being concluded, the attendant Helots served the black broth, and the party fell to, with the appetite produced by hardy exercise and mountain air.

"What do the allies say to the black broth?" asked a young Spartan.

"They do not comprehend its merits," answered Lysander.

CHAPTER VI.

EVERYTHING in the familiar life to which he had returned delighted the young Lysander. But for anxious thoughts about Pausanias, he would have been supremely blest. To him the various scenes of his early years brought no associations of the restraint and harshness which revolted the more luxurious nature and the fiercer genius of Pausanias. The plunge into the frigid waters of Eurotas—the sole bath permitted to the Spartans * at a time when then the rest of Greece had already carried the art of bathing into voluptuous refinement—the sight of the vehement contests of the boys, drawn up as in battle, at the game of football, or in detached engagements, sparing each other so little, that the popular belief out of Sparta was that they were permitted to tear out each other's eyes,† but subjecting

* Except occasionally the dry sudorific bath, all warm bathing was strictly forbidden as enervating.

† An evident exaggeration. The Spartans had too great a regard for the physical gifts as essential to warlike uses, to permit cruelties that would have blinded their young warriors. And they even forbade the practice of the pancratium as ferocious and needlessly dangerous to life.

strength to every skilful art that gymnastics could teach—the mimic war on the island, near the antique trees of the Plane Garden, waged with weapons of wood and blunted iron, and the march regulated to the music of flutes and lyres—nay, even the sight of the stern altar, at which boys had learned to bear the anguish of stripes without a murmur—all produced in this primitive and intensely national intelligence an increased admiration for the ancestral laws, which, carrying patience, fortitude, address and strength to the utmost perfection, had formed a handful of men into the calm lords of a fierce population, and placed the fenceless villages of Sparta beyond a fear of the external assaults and the civil revolutions which perpetually stormed the citadels and agitated the market-places of Hellenic cities. His was not the mind to perceive, that much was relinquished for the sake of that which was gained, or to comprehend that there was more which consecrates humanity in one stormy day of Athens, than in a serene century of iron Lacedæmon. But there is ever beauty of soul where there is enthusiastic love of country; and the young Spartan was wise in his own Dorian way.

The religious festival which had provided the Ephors with an excuse for delaying their answer to the Ionian envoys occupied the city. The youths and the maidens met in the sacred chorus; and Lysander, standing by amidst the gazers, suddenly felt his heart beat. A boy pulled him by the skirt of his mantle.

"Lysander, hast thou yet scolded Percalus?" said the boy's voice, archly.

"My young friend," answered Lysander, coloring high, "Percalus hath vouchsafed me as yet no occasion; and, indeed, she alone, of all the friends whom I left behind, does not seem to recognize me."

His eyes, as he spoke, rested with a mute reproach in their gaze on the form a virgin, who had just paused in the choral dance, and whose looks were bent obdurately on the ground. Her luxuriant hair was drawn upward from cheek and brow, braided into a knot at the crown of the head, in the fashion so trying to those who have neither bloom nor beauty, so exquisitely becoming to those who have both; and the maiden, even amid Spartan girls, was pre-eminently lovely. It is true that the sun had somewhat embrowned the smooth cheek; but the stately throat and the rounded arms were admirably fair—not, indeed, with the pale and dead whiteness which the Ionian women sought to obtain by art, but with the delicate rose-hue of Hebe's youth. Her garment of snow-white wool, fastened over both shoulders with large golden clasps, was without sleeves, fitting not too tightly to the harmonious form, and leaving more than the ankle free to the easy glide of the dance. Taller than Hellenic women usually were, but about the average height of her Spartan companions, her shape was that which the sculptors give to Artemis. Light and feminine and virginlike, but with all the rich vitality of a divine youth, with a force not indeed of a man, but such as art would give to the goddess whose step bounds over the mountain top, and whose arm can launch the shaft from the silver bow—yet was there something in the mien and face of Percalus more subdued and bashful than in those of most of the girls around her; and, as if her ear had caught Lysander's words, a smile just now played round her lips, and gave to all the countenance a wonderful sweetness. Then, as it became her turn once more to join in the circling measure she lifted her eyes, directed them full upon the young Spartan, and the eyes said plainly, "Ungrateful! I forget thee! I!"

It was but one glance, and she seemed again wholly intent upon the dance; but Lysander felt as if he had tasted the nectar, and caught a glimpse of the courts of the Gods. No further approach was made by either, although intervals in the evening permitted it. But if on the one hand there was in Sparta an intercourse between the youth of both sexes wholly unknown in most of the Grecian States, and if that intercourse made marriages of love especially more common there than elsewhere, yet, when love did actually exist, and was acknowledged by some young pair, they shunned public notice; the passion became a secret, or confidants to it were few. Then came the charm of stealth:—to woo and to win, as if the treasure were to be robbed by a lover from the Heaven unknown to man. Accordingly Lysander now mixed with the spectators, conversed cheerfully, only at distant intervals permitted his eyes to turn to Percalus, and when her part in the chorus had concluded, a sign, undetected by others, seemed to have been

exchanged between them, and, a little while after Lysander had disappeared from the assembly.

He wandered down the street called the Aphetais, and after a little while the way became perfectly still and lonely, for the inhabitants had crowded to the sacred festival, and the houses lay quiet and scattered. So he went on, passing the ancient temple in which Ulysses is said to have dedicated a statue in honor of his victory in the race over the suitors of Penelope, and paused where the ground lay bare and rugged around many a monument to the fabled chiefs of the heroic age. Upon a crag that jutted over a silent hollow, covered with oleander and arbute and here and there the wild rose, the young lover sat down, waiting patiently; for the eyes of Percalus had told him he should not wait in vain. Afar he saw, in the exceeding clearness of the atmosphere, the Tænarium or Temple of Neptune, unprophetic of the dark connection that shrine would hereafter have with him whom he then honored as a chief worthy, after death, of a monument amidst those heroes: and the gale that cooled his forehead wandered to him from the field of the Hellanium in which the envoys of Greece had taken council how to oppose the march of Xerxes, when his myriads first poured into Europe.

Alas, all the great passions that distinguish race from race pass away in the tide of generations. The enthusiasm of soul which gives us heroes and demi-gods for ancestors, and hallows their empty tombs; the vigor of thoughtful freedom which guards the soil from invasion, and shivers force upon the edge of intelligence; the heroic age and the civilized alike depart; and he who wanders through the glens of Laconia can scarcely guess where was the monument of Lelex, or the field of the Hellanium. And yet on the same spot where sat the young Spartan warrior, waiting for the steps of the beloved one, nay, at this very hour, some rustic lover be seated, with a heart beating with like emotions, and an ear listening for as light a tread. Love alone never passes away from the spot where its footstep hath once pressed the earth, and reclaimed the savage. Traditions, freedom, the thirst for glory, art, laws, creeds, vanish; but the eye thrills the breast, and hand warms to hand, as before the name of Lycurgus was heard, or Helen was borne a bride to the home of Menelaus. Under the influence of this power, then, something of youth is still retained by nations the most worn with time. But the power thus eternal in nations is shortlived for the individual being. Brief, indeed, in the life of each is that season which lasts for ever in the life of all. From the old age of nations glory fades away; but in their utmost decrepitude there is still a generation young enough to love. To the individual man, however, glory alone remains when the snows of ages have fallen, and love is but the memory of a boyish dream. No wonder that the Greek genius, half incredulous of the soul, clung with such tenacity to Youth. What a sigh from the heart of the old sensuous world breathes in the strain of Mimnermus, bewailing with so fierce and so deep a sorrow the advent of the years in which man is loved no more!

Lysander's eye was still along the solitary road, when he heard a low musical laugh behind him. He started in surprise, and beheld Percalus. Her mirth was increased by his astonished gaze, till, in revenge, he caught both her hands, and drawing her towards him, kissed, not without a struggle, the lips into serious gravity.

Extricating herself from him, the maiden put on an air of offended dignity, and Lysander, abashed at his own audacity, muttered some broken words of penitence.

"But indeed," he added, as he saw the cloud vanishing from her brow; "indeed thou wert so provoking, and so irrestibly beauteous. And how camest thou here, as if thou hadst dropped from the heavens?"

"Didst thou think," answered Percalus demurely, "that I could be suspected of following thee? Nay; I tarried till I could accompany Euryclea to her home yonder, and then slipping from her by her door, I came across the grass and the glen to search for the arrow shot yesterday in the hollow below thee." So saying, she tripped from the crag by his side into the nooked recess below, which was all out of sight, in case some passenger should pass the road, and where, stooping down, she seemed to busy herself in searching for the shaft amidst the odorous shrubs.

Lysander was not slow in following her footstep.

"Thine arrow is here," said he placing his hand to his heart.

"Fie! The Ionian poets teach thee these compliments."

"Not so. Who hath sung more of Love and his arrows than our own Alcman?"

"Mean you the Regent's favorite brother?"

"Oh no! The Ancient Alcman; the poet whom even the Ephors sanction."

Percalus ceased to seek for the arrow, and they seated themselves on a little knoll in the hollow, side by side, and frankly she gave him her hand, and listened, with rosy cheek and rising bosom, to his honest wooing. He told her truly, how her image had been with him in the strange lands; how faithful he had been to the absent, amidst all the beauties of the Isles and of the East. He reminded her of their early days—how, even as children, each had sought the other. He spoke of his doubts, his fears, lest he should find himself forgotten or replaced; and how overjoyed he had been when at last her eye replied to his.

"And we understood each other so well, did we not, Percalus? Here we have so often met before; here we parted last; here thou knewest I should go; here I knew that I might await thee."

Percalus did not answer at much length, but what she said sufficed to enchant her lover. For the education of a Spartan maid did not favor the affected concealment of real feelings. It could not, indeed, banish what Nature prescribes to women—the modest self-esteem—the difficulty to utter by word, what eye and blush reveal—nor, perhaps, something of that arch and innocent malice, which enjoys to taste the power which beauty exercises before the warm heart will freely acknowledge the power which sways itself. But the girl, though a little wilful and high-spirited, was a candid, pure, and noble creature, and too proud of being loved by Lysander to feel more than a maiden's shame to confess her own.

"And when I return," said the Spartan, "ah then look out and take care; for I shall speak to thy father, gain his consent to our betrothal, and then carry thee away, despite all thy struggles, to the bridesmaid, and these long locks, alas, will fall."

"I thank thee for thy warning, and will find my arrow in time to guard myself," said Percalus, turning away her face, but holding up her hand in pretty menace; "but where is the arrow? I must make haste and find it."

"Thou wilt have time enough, courteous Amazon, in mine absence, for I must soon return to Byzantium."

Percalus. "Art thou so sure of that?"

Lysander. "Why—dost thou doubt it?"

Percalus (rising and moving the arbute boughs aside with the tip of her scandal), "And, unless thou wouldst wait very long for my father's consent, perchance thou mayst have to ask for it very soon—too soon to prepare thy courage for so great a peril."

Lysander (perplexed). "What canst thou mean? By all the Gods, I pray thee speak plain."

Percalus. "If Pausanias be recalled, wouldst thou still go to Byzantium?"

Lysander. "No; but I think the Ephors have decided not so to discredit their General."

Percalus (shaking her head incredulously) "Count not on their decision so surely, valiant warrior; and suppose that Pausanias is recalled, and that some one else is sent in his place whose absence would prevent thy obtaining that consent thou covetest, and so frustrate thy designs on—on—(she added, blushing scarlet)—on these poor locks of mine."

Lysander (starting). "Oh, Percalus do I conceive thee aright? Hast thou any reason to think that thy father Dorcis will be sent to replace Pausanias—the great Pausanias?"

Percalus (a little offended at a tone of expression which seemed to slight her father's pretensions). "Dorcis, my father, is a warrior whom Sparta reckons second to no none; a most brave captain, and every inch a Spartan; but—but—"

Lysander. "Percalus, do not trifle with me. Thou knowest how my fate has been linked to the Regent's. Thou must have intelligence not shared even by my father, himself an Ephor.—What is it?"

Percalus. "Thou wilt be secret, my Lysander, for what I may tell thee I can only learn at the hearth-stone."

Lysander. "Fear me not. Is not all between us a secret?"

Percalus. "Well, then, Periclides and my father, as thou art aware, are near kinsmen. And when the Ionian Envoys first arrived, it was my father who was specially appointed to see to their fitting entertainment. And that

same night I overheard Dorcis say to my mother, 'if I could succeed Pausanias, and conclude this war, I should be consoled for not having commanded at Platæa.' And my mother, who is proud for her husband's glory, as a woman should be, said, 'Why not strain every nerve as for a crown in Olympia? Periclides will aid thee—thou wilt win.'"

Lysander. "But that was the first night of the Ionians' arrival."

Percalus. "Since then, I believe that my father and others of the Ephors overruled Periclides and Zeuxidamus, for I have heard all that passed between my father and mother on the subject. But early this morning, while my mother was assisting to attire me for the festival, Periclides himself called at our house, and before I came from home, my mother, after a short conference with Dorcis, said to me, in the exuberance of her joy, 'Go, child, and call here all the maidens, as thy father ere long will go to outshine all the Grecian Chiefs.' So that if my father does go, thou wilt remain in Sparta. Then, my beloved Lysander—and—and—but what ails thee? Is that thought so sorrowful?"

Lysander. "Pardon me, pardon; thou art a Spartan maid; thou must comprehend what should be felt by a Spartan soldier when he thinks of humiliation and ingratitude to his chief. Gods! the man who rolled back the storm of the Mede to be insulted in the face of Hellas by the government of his native city! The blush of shame upon his cheek burns my own."

The warrior bowed his face in his clasped hands.

Not a resentful thought natural to female vanity and exacting affection then crossed the mind of the Spartan girl. She felt at once, by the sympathy of kindred nurture, all that was torturing her lover. She was even prouder of him that he forgot her for the moment to be so truthful to his chief; and abandoning the innocent coyness she had before shown, she put her arm round his neck with a pure and sisterly fondness, and, kissing his brow, whispered soothingly, "It is for me to ask pardon, that I did not think of this—that I spoke so foolishly; but comfort—thy chief is not disgraced even by recall. Let them recall Pausanias, they cannot recall his glory. When, in Sparta, did we ever hold a brave man discredited by obedience to the government? None are disgraced who do not disgrace themselves."

"Ah! my Percalus, so I should say; but so will not think Pausanias, nor the allies; and in this slight to him I see the shadow of the Erinnys. But it may not be true yet; nor can Periclides of himself dispose thus of the Lacedæmonian armies."

"We will hope so, dear Lysander," said Percalus, who, born to be man's helpmate, then only thought of consoling and cheering him. "And if thou dost return to the camp, tarry as long as thou wilt, thou wilt find Percalus the same."

"The Gods bless thee, maiden!" said Lysander, with grateful passion, "and blessed be the State that rears such women; elsewhere Greece knows them not."

"And does Greece elsewhere know such men?" asked Percalus, raising her graceful head. "But so late—is it possible? See where the shadows are falling! Thou wilt but be in time for thy pheidition. Farewell."

"But when to meet again?'

"Alas! when we can." She sprang lightly away; then, turning her face as she fled, added, "Look out! thou wert taught to steal in thy boyhood—steal an interview. I will be thy accomplice."

CHAPTER VII.

THAT night, as Agesilaus was leaving the public table at which he supped, Periclides, who was one of the same company, but who had been unusually silent during the entertainment, approaching him, and said, "Let us walk towards thy home together; the moon is up, and will betray listeners to our converse should there be any."

"And in default of the moon, thy years, if not yet mine, permit thee a lanthorn, Periclides."

"I have not drunk enough to need it," answered the chief of the Ephors, with unusual pleasantry; "but as thou art the younger man, I will lean on thine arm, so as to be closer to thine ear."

"Thou hast something secret and grave to say, then?"

Periclides nodded.

LUCRETIA

As they ascended the rugged acclivity, different groups, equally returning home from the public tables, passed them. Though the sacred festival had given excuse for prolonging the evening meal, and the wine-cup had been replenished beyond the abstemious wont, still each little knot of revellers passed and dispersed in a sober and decorous quiet which perhaps no other eminent city in Greece could have exhibited; young and old equally grave and noiseless. For the Spartan youth, no fair Hetæræ then opened homes adorned with flowers, and gay with wit, no less than alluring with beauty; but as the streets grew more deserted, there stood in the thick shadow of some angle, or glided furtively by some winding wall, a bridegroom lover, tarrying till all was still, to steal to the arms of the lawful wife, whom for years perhaps he might not openly acknowledge, and carry in triumph to his home.

But not of such young adventurers thought the sage Periclides, though his voice was as low as a lover's "hist!" and his step as stealthy as a bridegroom's tread.

"My friend," said he, "with the faint grey of the dawn there comes to my house a new messenger from the camp, and the tidings he brings change all our decisions. The Festival does not permit us as Ephors to meet in public, or, at least, I think thou wilt agree with me it is more prudent not to do so. All we should do now should be in strict privacy."

"But hush! from whom the message—Pausanias?"

"No—from Aristides the Athenian."

"And to what effect?"

"The Ionians have revolted from the Spartan hegemony and ranged themselves under the Athenian flag."

"Gods! what I feared has already come to pass."

"And Aristides writes to me, with whom you remember that he has the hospitable ties, that the Athenians cannot abandon their Ionian allies and kindred who thus appeal to them, and that if Pausanias remain, open war may break out between the two divisions into which the fleet of Hellas is now rent."

"This must not be, for it would be war at sea; we and the Peloponnesians have far the fewer vessels, the less able seamen. Sparta would be conquered."

"Rather than Sparta should be conquered, must we not recall her General?"

"I would give all my lands, and sink out of the rank of Equal, that this had not chanced," said Agesilaus, bitterly.

"Hist! hist! not so loud."

"I had hoped we might induce the Regent himself to resign the command and so have been spared the shame and the pain of an act that affects the hero-blood of our kings. Could not that be done yet?"

"Dost thou think so? Pausanias resign in the midst of a mutiny? Thou canst not know the man."

"Thou art right—impossible. I see no option now. He must be recalled. But the Spartan hegemony is then gone—gone for ever—gone to Athens."

"Not so. Sparta hath many a worthy son beside this too arrogant Heracleid."

"Yes; but where his genius of command?—where his immense renown?—where a man, I say, not in Sparta, but in all Greece, fit to cope with Aristides and Cimon in the camp, with Themistocles in the city of our rivals? If Pausanias fails, who succeeds?"

"Be not deceived. What must be, must; it is but a little time earlier than Necessity would have fixed. Wouldst thou take the command?"

"I? The Gods forbid."

"Then, if thou wilt not, I know but one man."

"And who is he?"

"Dorcis."

Agesilaus started, and, by the light of the moon, gazed full upon the face of the chief Ephor.

"Thy kinsman, Dorcis? Ah! Periclides, hast thou schemed this from the first?"

Periclides changed color at finding himself thus abruptly detected, and as abruptly charged: however, he answered with laconic dryness,—

"Friend, did I scheme the revolt of the Ionians? But if thou knowest a better man than Dorcis, speak. Is he not brave?"

"Yes."

"Skilful?"

"No. Tut! thou art as conscious as I am that thou mightest as well compare the hat on thy brow to the brain it hides as liken the solid Dorcis to the fiery but profound Heracleid."

"Ay, ay. But there is one merit the hat has

which the brow has not—it can do no harm. Shall we send our chiefs to be made worse men by Eastern manners? Dorcis has dull wit, granted; no arts can corrupt it; he may not save the hegemony, but he will return as he went, a Spartan."

"Thou art right again, and a wise man, Periclides. I submit. Thou hast my vote for Dorcis. What else hast thou designed? for I see now that whatever thou designest that wilt thou accomplish; and our meeting on the Archeion is but an idle form."

"Nay, nay," said Periclides, with his austere smile, "thou givest me a wit and a will that I have not. But as chief of the Ephors I watch over the state. And though I design nothing, this I would counsel,—On the day we answer the Ionians, we shall tell them, 'What ye ask we long since proposed to do. And Dorcis is already on the seas as successor to Pausanias.'"

"When will Dorcis leave?" said Agesilaus, curtly.

"If the other Ephors concur, to-morrow night."

"Here we are at my doors, wilt thou not enter?"

"No. I have others yet to see. I know we should be of the same mind."

Agesilaus made no reply; but as he entered the court-yard of his house, he muttered uneasily,—

"And if Lysander is right, and Sparta is too small for Pausanias, do not we bring back a giant who will widen it to his own girth, and raise the old foundations to make room for the buildings he would add?"

* * * * *

(UNFINISHED.)

THE pages covered by the manuscript of this uncompleted story of "Pausanias" are scarcely more numerous than those which its author has filled with the notes made by him from works consulted with special reference to the subject of it. Those notes (upon Greek and Persian antiquities) are wholly without interest for the general public. They illustrate the author's conscientious industry, but they afford no clue to the plot of his romance. Under the sawdust, however, thus fallen in the industrial process of an imaginative work, unhappily unfinished, I have found two specimens of original composition. They are rough sketches of songs expressly composed for "Pausanias;" and, since they are not included in the foregoing portion of it, I think they may properly be added here. The unrhymed lyrics introduced by my father into some of the opening chapters of this romance appear to have been suggested by some fragments of Mimnermus, and composed about the same time as "The Lost Tales of Miletus." Indeed, one of them has been already printed in that work. The following verses, however, which are rhymed, bear evidence of having been composed at a much earlier period. I know not whether it was my father's intention to discard them altogether, or to alter them materially, or to insert them without alteration in some later portion of the romance. But I print them here precisely as they are written. L.

FOR PAUSANIAS.

Partially Borrowed from Aristophanes' "Peace." —v. 1127, etc.

AWAY, away, with the helm and greaves,
Away with the leeks and cheese! *
I have conquered my passion for wounds and blows,
And the worst that I wish to the worst of my foes
Is the glory and gain
Of a year's campaign
On a diet of leeks and cheese.

I love to drink by my own warm hearth,
Nourisht with logs from the pine-clad heights,
Which were hewn in the blaze of the summer sun
To treasure his rays for the winter nights
On the hearth where my grandam spun.

I love to drink of the grape I press,
And to drink with a friend of yore;
Quick! bring me a bough from the myrtle tree
Which is budding afresh by Nicander's door.
Tell Nicander himself he must sup with me,
And along with the bough from his myrtle tree
We will circle the lute, in a choral glee
To the goddess of corn and peace.
For Nicander and I were fast friends at school.
Here he comes! We are boys once more.

When the grasshopper chaunts in the bells of thyme
I love to watch if the Lemnian grape †
Is donning the purple that decks its prime;

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* Τυροῦ τε καὶ κρομμύων. Cheese and onions, the rations furnished to soldiers in campaign.

† It ripened earlier than the others. The words of the chorus are, τὰς Δημητρος ἀμπέλους οἱ πεπαίνουσιν ὧδε.

And, as I sit at my porch to see,
With my little one trying to scale my knee,
To join in the grasshopper's chaunt and sing
To Apollo and Pan from the heart of Spring. *
Listen, O list!

Hear ye not, neighbors, the voice of Peace?
"The swallow I hear in the household eaves."
Io Ægien! Peace!
'And the skylark at poise o'er the bended sheeves,"
Io Ægien! Peace!
Here and there, everywhere, hear we Peace,
Hear her, and see her, and clasp her—Peace!
The grasshopper chaunts in the bells of thyme,
And the halcyon is back to her nest in Greece!

IN PRAISE OF THE ATHENIAN KNIGHTS.

Imitated from the "Knights" of Aristophanes, —v. 595, etc.

CHAUNT the fame of the Knights, or in war or in peace,
Chaunt the darlings of Athens,† the bulwarks of Greece,
Pressing foremost to glory, on wave and on shore,
Where the steed has no footing they win with the oar.‡

On their bosoms the battle splits, wasting its shock.
If they charge like the whirlwind, they stand like the rock.

Ha! they count not the numbers, they scan not the ground,
When a foe comes in sight on his lances they bound.

Fails a foot in its speed? heed it not. One and all *
Spurn the earth that they spring from, and own not a fall.
O the darlings of Athens, the bulwarks of Greece,
Wherefore envy the lovelocks they perfume in peace!

Wherefore scowl if they fondle a quail or a dove,
Or inscribe on a myrtle the names that they love?
Does Alcides not teach us how valor is mild?
Lo, at rest from his labors he plays with a child.

When the slayer of Python has put down his bow,
By his lute and his lovelocks Apollo we know.
Fear'd, O rowers, those gallants their beauty to spoil,
When they sat on your benches, and shared in your toil!

When with laughter they row'd to your cry "Hippopai,"
"On, ye coursers of wood, for the palm wreath away!"
Did those dainty youths ask you to store in your holds
Or a cask from their crypt or a lamb from their folds?

No, they cried, "We are here both to fight and to fast,
Place us first in the fight, at the board serve us last!
Wheresoever is peril, we knights lead the way,
Wheresoever is hardship, we claim it as pay.

"Call us proud, O Athenians, we know it full well,
And we give you the life we're too haughty to sell."
Hail the stoutest in war, hail the mildest in peace,
Hail the darlings of Athens, the bulwarks of Greece!

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* Variation—
"What a blessing is life in a noon of Spring."

† Variation—
"The adorners of Athens, the bulwarks of Greece."

‡ Variation—
"Keenest racers to glory, on wave or on shore,
By the rush of the steed or the stroke of the oar!"

* Variation—
"Falls there one? never help him! Our knights one and all."

LUCRETIA;

OR,

THE CHILDREN OF NIGHT.

PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

LUCRETIA, OR THE CHILDREN OF NIGHT, was begun simultaneously with THE CAXTONS, A FAMILY PICTURE. The two fictions were intended as *pendants;* both serving, amongst other collateral aims and objects, to show the influence of home education,—of early circumstance and example upon after character and conduct. LUCRETIA was completed and published before THE CAXTONS. The moral design of the first was misunderstood and assailed; that of the last was generally acknowledged and approved; the moral design in both was nevertheless precisely the same. But in one it was sought through the darker side of human nature, in the other, through the more sunny and cheerful—one shows the evil, the other the salutary influences of early circumstance and training. Necessarily therefore the first resorts to the tragic elements of awe and distress—the second to the comic elements of humor and agreeable emotion. These differences serve to explain the different reception that awaited the two, and may teach us how little the real conception of an author is known, and how little it is cared for: we judge—not by the purpose he conceives, but according as the impressions he effects are pleasurable or painful.

But while I cannot acquiesce in much of the hostile criticism this fiction produced at its first appearance, I readily allow that, as a mere question of art, the story might have been improved in itself, and rendered more acceptable to the reader, by diminishing the gloom of the catastrophe. In this edition I have endeavored to do so; and the victim whose fate in the former cast of the work most revolted the reader, as a violation of the trite but amiable law of Poetical Justice, is saved from the hands of THE CHILDREN OF NIGHT. Perhaps —whatever the fault of this work—it equals most of its companions in the sustainment of interest, and in that coincidence between the gradual development of motive or passion, and the sequences of external events constituting plot, which mainly distinguish the physical awe of tragedy from the coarse horrors of melodrama. I trust at least that I shall *now* find few readers, who will not readily acknowledge that the delineation of crime has only been employed for the grave and impressive purpose which brings it within the due province of the poet, as an element of terror and a warning to the heart. But should any candid reader, after careful perusal, close this book with a doubt as to its ethical object and tendency, or as to the sanction of its sombre materials by the example of the greatest masters in imaginative compositions,—I will entreat him to cast his eye over the Critical Essay entitled A WORD TO THE PUBLIC, appended to this edition, which contains all that I desire to say in definition of the purpose designed in Lucretia,—and in defence of those legitimate sources of tragic interest from which the narrative is derived.

LONDON, *Dec. 7th*, 1853.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

It is somewhere about four years since I appeared before the public as the writer of a fiction, which I then intimated would probably be my last; but bad habits are stronger than good intentions. When Fabricio, in his hospital, resolved upon abjuring the vocation of the Poet, he was in truth re-commencing his desperate career by a Farewell to the Muses:—I need not apply the allusion.

I must own, however, that there had long been a desire in my mind to trace in some work or other,—the strange and secret ways through which that Arch-ruler of Civilization, familiarly called "Money,"—insinuates itself into our thoughts and motives, our hearts and actions; affecting those who undervalue as those who over estimate its importance; ruining virtues in the spendthrift no less than engendering vices in the miser. But when I half implied my farewell to the character of a novelist, I had imagined that this conception might be best worked out upon the stage. After some unpublished and imperfect attempts towards so realizing my design, I found either that the subject was too wide for the limits of the Drama, or that I wanted that faculty of concentration which alone enables the dramatist to compress multiform varieties into a very limited compass. With this design, I desired to unite some exhibition of what seems to me a principal vice in the hot and emulous chase for happiness or fame, fortune or knowledge, which is almost synonymous with the cant phrase of "the March of Intellect," in that crisis of society to which we have arrived. The vice I allude to is Impatience. That eager desire to press forward, not so much to conquer obstacles, as to elude them; that gambling with the solemn destinies of life, seeking ever to set success upon the chance of a die; that hastening from the wish conceived to the end accomplished; that thirst after quick returns to ingenious toil, and breathless spurrings along short cuts to the goal, which we see everywhere around us, from the Mechanics' Institute to the Stock Market,—beginning in education with the primers of infancy—deluging us with "Philosophies for the Million," and "Sciences made Easy;" characterizing the books of our writers, the speeches of our statesmen, no less than the dealings of our speculators, seem, I confess, to me, to constitute a very diseased and very general symptom of the times, I hold that the greatest friend to man is labor; that knowledge without toil, if possible, were worthless; that toil in pursuit of knowledge is the best knowledge we can attain; that the continuous effort for fame is nobler than fame itself; that it is not wealth suddenly acquired which is deserving of homage, but the virtues which a man exercises in the slow pursuit of wealth,—the abilities so called forth, the self-denials so imposed: in a word that Labor and Patience are the true schoolmasters on earth. While occupied with these ideas and this belief, whether right or wrong, and slowly convinced that it was only in that species of composition with which I was most familiar that I could work out some portion of the plan that I began to contemplate, I became acquainted with the histories of two criminals, existing in our own age;—so remarkable, whether from the extent and darkness of the guilt committed—whether from the glittering accomplishments and lively temper of the one, the profound knowledge and intellectual capacities of the other—that the examination and analysis of characters so perverted became a study full of intense, if gloomy interest.

In these persons there appear to have been as few redeemable points as can be found in Human Nature, so far as such points may be traced in the kindly instincts and generous passions which do sometimes accompany the perpetration of great crimes, and without excusing the individual, vindicate the species. Yet, on the other hand, their sanguinary wickedness was not the dull ferocity of brutes;—it was accompanied with instruction and culture:—nay, it seemed to me, on studying their lives, and pondering over their own letters, that through their cultivation itself we could arrive at the secret of the ruthless and atrocious pre-eminence in evil these Children of Night had attained—that here the monster vanished into the mortal, and the phenomena that seemed aberrations from nature were explained.

I could not resist the temptation of reducing to a tale the materials which had so engrossed my interest and tasked my inquiries. And in this attempt, various incidental opportunities have occurred, if not of completely carrying

out, still of incidentally illustrating, my earlier design;—of showing the influence of Mammon upon our most secret selves, of reproving the impatience which is engendered by a civilization—that with much of the good brings all the evils of competition, and of tracing throughout all the influences of early household life upon our subsequent conduct and career. In such incidental bearings the moral may doubtless be more obvious than in the delineation of the darker and rarer crime which forms the staple of my narrative. For in extraordinary guilt, we are slow to recognize ordinary warnings—we say to the peaceful conscience, "This concerns thee not!"—whereas at each instance of familiar fault and common-place error we own a direct and sensible admonition. Yet in the portraiture of gigantic crime, poets have rightly found their sphere, and fulfilled their destiny, of teachers. Those terrible truths, which appal us in the guilt of Macbeth, or the villany of Iago, have their moral uses not less than the popular infirmities of Tom Jones, or the every-day hypocrisy of Blifil.

Incredible as it may seem, the crimes herein related took place within the last seventeen years. There has been no exaggeration as to their extent, no great departure from their details—the means employed, even that which seems most far-fetched (the instrument of the poisoned ring), have their foundation in literal facts. Nor have I much altered the social position of the criminals, nor in the least overrated their attainments and intelligence. In those more salient essentials, which will most, perhaps, provoke the Reader's incredulous wonder, I narrate a history, not invent a fiction.* All that romance which our own time affords is not more the romance than the philosophy of the time. Tragedy never quits the world—it surrounds us everywhere. We have but to look, wakeful and vigilant, abroad,—and from the age of Pelops to that of Borgia, the same crimes, though under different garbs, will stalk on our paths. Each age comprehends in itself a specimens of every virtue and every vice which has ever inspired our love or moved our horror.

LONDON, *November 1st*, 1846.

* These criminals were not, however, in actual life, as in the novel, intimates and accomplices. Their crimes were of similar character, effected by similar agencies, and committed at dates which embrace their several careers of guilt within the same period: but I have no authority to suppose that the one was known to the other.

PART THE FIRST.

PROLOGUE TO PART THE FIRST.

In an apartment at Paris, one morning, during the Reign of Terror, a man, whose age might be somewhat under thirty, sate before a table covered with papers, arranged and labelled with the methodical precision of a mind fond of order and habituated to business. Behind him rose a tall book-case, surmounted with a bust of Robespierre, and the shelves were filled chiefly with works of a scientific character; amongst which the greater number were on chemistry and medicine. There, were to be seen also many rare books on alchemy, the great Italian historians, some English philosophical treatises, and a few MSS. in Arabic. The absence, from this collection, of the stormy literature of the day, seemed to denote that the owner was a quiet student living apart from the strife and passions of the Revolution. This supposition was, however, disproved by certain papers on the table, which were formally and laconically labelled "Reports on Lyons," and by packets of letters in the handwritings of Robespierre and Couthon. At one of the windows, a young boy was earnestly engaged in some occupation, which appeared to excite the curiosity of the person just described; for this last, after examining the child's movements for a few moments with a silent scrutiny, that betrayed but little of the half-complacent, half-melancholy affection with which busy man is apt to regard idle childhood, rose noiselessly from his seat, approached the boy, and looked over his shoulder unobserved. In a crevice of the wood by the window, a huge black spider had formed his web; the child had just discovered another spider, and placed it in the meshes; he was watching the result of his operations. The intrusive spider stood motionless in the midst of the web, as if fascinated. The rightful possessor was also quiescent; but a very fine ear might have caught a low humming sound, which probably augured no hospitable intentions to the invader. Anon, the stranger insect seemed suddenly to awake from its amaze; it evinced alarm, and turned to fly; the huge spider darted forward—the boy uttered a chuckle of delight. The man's pale lip curled into a sinister sneer, and he glided back to his seat. There, leaning his face on his hand, he continued to contemplate the child. That child might have furnished to an artist a fitting subject for fair and blooming infancy. His light hair, tinged deeply, it is true, with red, hung in sleek and glittering abundance down his neck and shoulders. His features, seen in profile, were delicately and almost femininely proportioned; health glowed on his cheek, and his form, slight though it was, gave promise of singular activity and vigor. His dress was fantastic, and betrayed the taste of some fondly foolish mother; but the fine linen, trimmed with lace, was rumpled and stained, the velvet jacket unbrushed, the shoes soiled with dust;—slight tokens these of neglect—but serving to show that the foolish fondness which had invented the dress, had not of late presided over the toilet.

"Child," said the man, first in French; and observing that the boy heeded him not—"child," he repeated in English, which he spoke well, though with a foreign accent—"child!"

The boy turned quickly.

"Has the great spider devoured the small one?"

"No, sir," said the boy, coloring; "the small one has had the best of it." The tone and

heightened complexion of the child seemed to give meaning to his words—at least, so the man thought,—for a slight frown passed over his high, thoughtful brow.

"Spiders, then," he said, after a short pause, "are different from men; with us, the small do not get the better of the great. Hum! do you still miss your mother?"

"Oh, yes!" and the boy advanced eagerly to the table.

"Well, you will see her once again."

"When?"

The man looked towards a clock on the mantel-piece—"Before that clock strikes. Now, go back to your spiders." The child looked irresolute and disinclined to obey; but a stern and terrible expression gathered slowly over the man's face; and the boy, growing pale as he remarked it, crept back to the window.

The father, for such was the relation the owner of the room bore to the child, drew paper and ink towards him, and wrote for some minutes rapidly. Then starting up, he glanced at the clock, took his hat and cloak, which lay on a chair beside, drew up the collar of the mantle till it almost concealed his countenance, and said—"Now, boy, come with me; I have promised to show you an execution. I am going to keep my promise. Come!"

The boy clapped his hands with joy; and you might see then, child as he was, that those fair features were capable of a cruel and ferocious expression. The character of the whole face changed. He caught up his gay cap and plume, and followed his father into the streets.

Silently the two took their way towards the *Barrière du Thrône*. At a distance, they saw the crowd growing thick and dense, as throng after throng hurried past them, and the dreadful guillotine rose high in the light blue air. As they came into the skirts of the mob, the father, for the first time, took his child's hand. "I must get you a good place for the show," he said, with a quiet smile.

There was something in the grave, staid, courteous, yet haughty bearing of the man, that made the crowd give way as he passed. They got near the dismal scene, and obtained entrance into a wagon already crowded with eager spectators.

And now they heard at a distance the harsh and lumbering roll of the tumbril that bore the victims, and the tramp of the horses which guarded the procession of death. The boy's whole attention was absorbed in expectation of the spectacle, and his ear was, perhaps, less accustomed to French, though born and reared in France, than to the language of his mother's lips—and she was English: thus he did not hear or heed certain observations of the bye-standers, which made his father's pale cheek grow paler.

"What is the batch to-day?" quoth a butcher in the wagon.

"Scarce worth the baking—only two:—but one, they say, is an aristocrat—a *ci-devant* marquis," answered a carpenter.

"Ah! a marquis!—*Bon!*—And the other?"

"Only a dancer; but a pretty one, it is true: I could pity her but she is English." And as he pronounced the last word, with a tone of inexpressible contempt, the butcher spat, as if in nausea.

"*Mort diable!* a spy of Pitt's, no doubt. What did they discover?"

A man better dressed than the rest, turned round with a smile, and answered—"Nothing worse than a lover, I believe; but that lover was a *proscrit*. The *ci-devant* marquis was caught disguised in her apartment. She betrayed for him a good easy friend of the people, who had long loved her, and revenge is sweet."

The man whom we have accompanied nervously twitched up the collar of his cloak, and his compressed lips told that he felt the anguish of the laugh that circled round him.

"They are coming! There they are!" cried the boy in ecstatic excitement.

"That's the way to bring up citizens," said the butcher, patting the child's shoulder, and opening a still better view for him at the edge of the wagon.

The crowd now abruptly gave way. The tumbril was in sight. A man, young and handsome, standing erect and with folded arms in the fatal vehicle, looked along the mob with an eye of careless scorn. Though he wore the dress of a workman, the most unpractised glance could detect, in his mien and bearing, one of the hated *noblesse*, whose characteristics came out even more forcibly at the hour of death. On the lip was that smile of gay and insolent levity, on the brow that gallant if reckless contempt of physical dan-

ger, which had signalized the hero-coxcombs of the old *régime*. Even the rude dress was worn with a certain air of foppery, and the bright hair was carefully adjusted as if for the holiday of the headsman. As the eyes of the young noble wandered over the fierce faces of that horrible assembly, while a roar of hideous triumph answered the look, in which for the last time the *gentilhomme* spoke his scorn of the *canaille*, the child's father lowered the collar of his cloak, and slowly raised his hat from his brow.

The eye of the marquis rested upon the countenance thus abruptly shown to him, and which suddenly became individualized amongst the crowd,—that eye instantly lost its calm contempt. A shudder passed visibly over his frame, and his cheek grew blanched with terror. The mob saw the change, but not the cause, and loud and louder rose their triumphant yell. The sound recalled the pride of the young noble;—he started—lifted his crest erect, and sought again to meet the look which had appalled him. But he could no longer single it out among the crowd. Hat and cloak once more hid the face of the foe, and crowds of eager heads intercepted the view. The young marquis's lips muttered; he bent down, and then the crowd caught sight of his companion, who was being lifted up from the bottom of the tumbril, where she had flung herself in horror and despair. The crowd grew still in a moment, as the pale face of one, familiar to most of them, turned wildly from place to place in the dreadful scene, vainly and madly through its silence, imploring life and pity. How often had the sight of that face, not then pale and haggard, but wreathed with rosy smiles, sufficed to draw down the applause of the crowded theatre—how, then, had those breasts, now fevered by the thirst of blood, held hearts spell-bound by the airy movements of that exquisite form writhing now in no stage-mime agony! Plaything of the city—minion to the light amusement of the hour—frail child of Cytherea and the Graces, what relentless fate has conducted *thee* to the shambles? Butterfly of the summer, why should a nation rise to break *thee* upon the wheel?

A sense of the mockery of such an execution, of the horrible burlesque that would sacrifice to the necessities of a mighty people so slight an offering, made itself felt among the crowd. There was a low murmur of shame and indignation. The dangerous sympathy of the mob was perceived by the officer in attendance. Hastily he made the sign to the headsman, and, as he did so, a child's cry was heard in the English tongue—"Mother—mother!" The Father's hand grasped the child's arm, with an iron pressure; the crowd swam before the boy's eyes; the air seemed to stifle him, and become blood-red; only through the hum, and the tramp, and the roll of the drums, he heard a low voice hiss in his ear—"Learn how they perish who betray me!"

As the father said these words, again his face was bare, and the woman whose ear, amidst the dull insanity of fear, had caught the cry of her child's voice, saw that face, and fell back insensible in the arms of the headsman.

CHAPTER I.

A Family Group.

One July evening, at the commencement of the present century, several persons were somewhat picturesquely grouped along an old-fashioned terrace, which skirted the garden side of a manor-house that had considerable pretensions to baronial dignity. The architecture was of the most enriched and elaborate style belonging to the reign of James the First: the porch, opening on the terrace, with its mullion window above, was encased with pilasters and reliefs, at once ornamental and massive; and the large square tower in which it was placed, was surmounted by a stone falcon, whose talons gripped fiercely a scutcheon blazoned with the five pointed stars which heralds recognize as the arms of St. John. On either side of the tower extended long wings, the dark brickwork of which was relieved with noble stone casements and carved pediments; the high roof was partially concealed by a balustrade, perforated not inelegantly into arabesque designs; and what architects call 'the sky line' was broken with imposing effect the tall chimney shafts, of various form and fashion. These wings terminated in angular towers, similar to the centre, though kept duly subordinate to it both

in size and decoration, and crowned with stone cupolas. A low balustrade, of later date than which adorned the roof, relieved by vases and statues, bordered the terrace, from which a double flight of steps descended to a smooth lawn, intersected by broad gravel walks, shadowed by vast and stately cedars, and gently and gradually mingling with the wilder scenery of the park, from which it was only divided by a ha-ha.

Upon the terrace, and under cover of a temporary awning, sate the owner, Sir Miles St. John, of Laughton, a comely old man, dressed with faithful precision to the costume which he had been taught to consider appropriate to his rank of gentleman, and which was not yet wholly obsolete and eccentric. His hair, still thick and luxuriant, was carefully powdered, and collected into a club behind. His nether man attired in grey breeches and pearl colored silk stockings; his vest of silk, opening wide at the breast, and showing a profusion of frill, slightly sprinkled with the pulvilio of his favorite martinique; his three-cornered hat, placed on a stool at his side, with a gold-headed crutch-cane,—hat made rather to be carried in the hand than worn on the head, the diamond in his shirt-breast, the diamond on his finger, the ruffles at his wrist,—all bespoke the gallant, who had chatted with Lord Chesterfield, and supped with Mrs. Clive. On a table before him, were placed two or three decanters of wine, the fruits of the season, an enambled snuff-box, in which was set the portrait of a female—perhaps the Chloe or Phillis of his early love-ditties; a lighted taper, a small china jar containing tobacco, and three or four pipes of homely clay, for cherry-sticks and meerschaums were not then in fashion; and Sir Miles St. John, once a gay and sparkling beau, now a popular country gentleman, great at country meetings and sheep-shearing festivals, had taken to smoking, as in harmony with his bucolic transformation; an old setter lay dozing at his feet; a small spaniel—old, too—was sauntering lazily in the immediate neighborhood, looking gravely out for such stray bits of biscuit as had been thrown forth to provoke him to exercise, and which hitherto had escaped his attention. Half seated, half reclined on the balustrade, apart from the Baronet, but within reach of his conversation, lolled a man in the prime of life, with an air of unmistakable and sovereign elegance and distinction. Mr. Vernon was a guest from London: and the London man, the man of clubs, and dinners and routs—of noon loungings through Bond Street; and nights spent with the Prince of Wales, seemed stamped not more upon the careful carelessness of his dress, and upon the worn expression of his delicate features, than upon the listless *ennui*, which, characterizing both his face and attitude, appeared to take pity on himself for having been entrapped into the country.

Yet we should convey an erroneous impression of Mr. Vernon, if we designed, by the words "listless *ennui*," to depict the slumberous insipidity of more modern affectation—it was not the *ennui* of a man to whom *ennui* is habitual; it was rather the indolent prostration that fills up the intervals of excitement. At that day, the word "*blasé*" was unknown; men had not enough sentiment for satiety. There was a kind of Bacchanalian fury in the life led by those leaders of fashion among whom Mr. Vernon was not the least distinguished: it was a day of deep drinking, of high play, of jovial reckless dissipation—of strong appetite for fun and riot—of four-in-hand coachmanship—of prize-fighting—of a strange sort of barbarous manliness, that strained every nerve of the constitution; a race of life, in which three-fourths of the competitors died half-way in the hippodrome. What is now the Dandy was then the Buck; and something of the Buck, though subdued by a chaster taste than fell to the ordinary members of his class, was apparent in Mr. Vernon's costume as well as air. Intricate folds of muslin, arranged in prodigious bows and ends, formed the cravat, which Brummell had not yet arisen to reform; his hat of a very peculiar shape, low at the crown and broad at the brim, was worn with an air of devil-me-care defiance; his watch-chain, garnished with a profusion of rings and seals, hung low from his white waistcoat; and the adaptation of his nankin inexpressibles to his well-shaped limbs, was a masterpiece of art. His whole dress and air was not what could properly be called foppish—it was rather what at that time was called 'rakish.' Few could so closely approach vulgarity without being vulgar: of that privileged few, Mr. Vernon was one of the elect. Further on, and

near the steps descending into the garden, stood a man in an attitude of profound abstraction; his arms folded, his eyes bent on the ground, his brows slightly contracted; his dress was a plain black surtout, and pantaloons of the same color; something both in the fashion of the dress, and still more in the face of the man, bespoke the foreigner.

Sir Miles St. John was an accomplished person for that time of day; he had made the grand tour; he had bought pictures and statues; he spoke and wrote well in the modern languages; and being rich, hospitable, social, and not averse from the reputation of a patron, he had opened his house freely to the host of emigrants whom the French Revolution had driven to our coasts. Oliver Dalibard, a man of considerable learning and rare scientific attainments, had been tutor in the house of the Marquis de G——, a French nobleman, known many years before to the old baronet. The Marquis and his family had been among the first *emigrés* at the outbreak of the Revolution. The tutor had remained behind; for at that time no danger appeared to threaten those who pretended to no other aristocracy than that of letters. Contrary, as he said, with repentant modesty, to his own inclinations, he had been compelled, not only for his own safety, but for that of his friends, to take some part in the subsequent events of the Revolution—a part far from sincere, though so well had he simulated the patriot, that he had won the personal favor and protection of Robespierre; nor till the fall of that virtuous exterminator had he withdrawn from the game of politics, and effected in disguise his escape to England.

As, whether from kindly or other motives he had employed the power of his position in the esteem of Robespierre, to save certain noble heads from the guillotine—amongst others, the two brothers of the Marquis de G——, he was received with grateful welcome by his former patrons, who readily pardoned his career of Jacobinism, from their belief in his excuses, and their obligations to the services which that very career had enabled him to render to their kindred. Olivier Dalibard had accompanied the Marquis and his family in one of the frequent visits they paid to Laughton; and when the Marquis finally quitted England, and fixed his refuge at Vienna, with some connections of his wife's, he felt a lively satisfaction at the thought of leaving his friend honorably, if unambitiously, provided for, as secretary and librarian to Sir Miles St. John. In fact, the scholar, who possessed considerable powers of fascination, had won no less favor with the English baronet than he had with the French dictator. He played well both at chess and backgammon; he was an extraordinary accountant; he had a variety of information upon all points, that rendered him more convenient than any cyclopædia in Sir Miles's library; and as he spoke both English and Italian with a correctness and fluency extremely rare in a Frenchman, he was of considerable service in teaching languages to (as well as directing the general literary education of) Sir Miles's favorite niece—whom we shall take an early opportunity to describe at length.

Nevertheless, there had been one serious obstacle to Dalibard's acceptance of the appointment offered to him by Sir Miles. Dalibard had under his charge a young orphan boy of some ten or twelve years old—a boy whom Sir Miles was not long in suspecting to be the scholar's son. This child had come from France with Dalibard, and (while the Marquis's family were in London) remained under the eye and care of his guardian or father, whichever was the true connection between the two. But this superintendence became impossible, if Dalibard settled in Hampshire with Sir Miles St. John and the boy remained in London; nor, though the generous old gentleman offered to pay for the child's schooling, would Dalibard consent to part with him. At last, the matter was arranged. the boy was invited to Laughton on a visit, and was so lively, yet so well mannered, that he became a favorite, and was now fairly quartered in the house with his reputed father: and not to make an unnecessary mystery of this connection, such was in truth the relationship between Olivier Dalibard and Honoré Gabriel Varney — a name significant of the double and illegitimate origin — a French father, an English mother; dropping, however, the purely French appellation of Honoré, he went familiarly by that of Gabriel. Half way down the steps stood the lad, pencil and tablet in hand, sketching. Let us look over his shoulder —it is his father's likeness—a countenance in

itself not very remarkable at the first glance, for the features were small, but when examined, it was one that most persons, women especially, would have pronounced handsome, and to which none could deny the higher praise of thought and intellect. A native of Provençe, with some Italian blood in his veins —for his grandfather, a merchant of Marseilles, had married into a Florentine family settled at Leghorn—the dark complexion, common with those in the south, had been subdued, probably by the habits of the student, into a bronzed and steadfast paleness, which seem almost fair by the contrast of the dark hair which he wore unpowdered, and the still darker brows which hung thick and prominent over clear grey eyes. Compared with the features, the skull was disproportionally large, both behind and before; and a physiognomist would have drawn conclusions more favorable to the power than the tenderness of the Provençal's character, from the compact closeness of the lips and the breadth and massiveness of the iron jaw. But the son's sketch exaggerated every feature, and gave to the expression a malignant and terrible irony, not now, at least, apparent in the quiet and meditative aspect. Gabriel himself, as he stood, would have been a more tempting study to many an artist. It is true that he was small for his years; but his frame had a vigor in its light proportions, which came from a premature and almost adolescent symmetry of shape and muscular development.

The countenance, however, had much of effeminate beauty; the long hair reached the shoulders, but did not curl; straight, fine, and glossy as a girl's, and, in color, of the pale auburn, tinged with red, which rarely alters in hue as childhood matures to man; the complexion was dazzlingly clear and fair Nevertheless, there was something so hard in the lip, so bold, though not open, in the brow, that the girlishness of complexion, and even of outline, could not leave, on the whole, an impression of effeminacy. All the hereditary keenness and intelligence were stamped upon his face at that moment; but the expression had also a large share of the very irony and malice which he had conveyed to his caricature. The drawing itself was wonderfully vigorous and distinct, showing great artistic promise, and done with the rapidity and ease which betrayed practice. Suddenly his father turned, and with as sudden a quickness, the boy concealed his tablet in his vest; and the sinister expression of his face smoothed into a timorous smile, as his eye encountered Dalibard's. The father beckoned to the boy, who approached with alacrity. "Gabriel," whispered the Frenchman, in his own tongue, "where are they at this moment?"

The boy pointed silently towards one of the cedars. Dalibard mused an instant, and then slowly descending the steps, took his noiseless way over the smooth turf towards the tree. Its boughs dropped low and spread wide; and not till he was within a few paces of the spot, could his eye perceive two forms, seated on a bench under the dark green canopy. He then paused and contemplated them.

The one was a young man, whose simple dress and subdued air strongly contrasted the artificial graces and the modish languor of Mr. Vernon; but though wholly without that nameless distinction which sometimes characterizes those conscious of pure race, and habituated to the atmosphere of courts, he had at least Nature's stamp of aristocracy in a form eminently noble, and features of manly, but surpassing beauty, which were not rendered less engaging by an expression of modest timidity. He seemed to be listening with thoughtful respect to his companion, a young female by his side, who was speaking to him with an earnestness visibie in her gestures and her animated countenance. And though there was much to notice in the various persons scattered over the scene, not one, perhaps—not the graceful Vernon—not the thoughtful scholar, nor his fair-haired hard-lipped son—not even the handsome listener she addressed —no, not one there would so have arrested the eye, whether of a physiognomist or a casual observer as that young girl—Sir Miles St. John's favorite niece and presumptive heiress.

But as at that moment, the expression of her face differed from that habitual to it, we defer its description.

"Do not"—such were her words to her companion,—"do not alarm yourself by exaggerating the difficulties; do not even contemplate them—those be my care. Mainwaring, when I loved you, when, seeing that your diffidence or your pride forbade you to be the first to speak, I overstepped the modesty or the dis-

simulation of my sex; when I said,—'Forget that I am the reputed heiress of Laughton; see in me but the faults and merits of the human being, of the wild unregulated girl; see in me but Lucretia Clavering (here her cheeks blushed, and her voice sank into a lower and more tremulous whisper), and love her if you can!'—When I went thus far, do not think I had not measured all the difficulties in the way of our union, and felt that I could surmount them.

"But," answered Mainwaring, hesitatingly, "can you conceive it possible that your uncle ever will consent? Is not pride—the pride of family—almost the leading attribute of his character? Did he not discard your mother—his own sister—from his house and heart, for no other offence but a second marriage, which he deemed beneath her? Has he ever even consented to see, much less to receive, your half-sister—the child of that marriage? Is not his very affection for you interwoven with his pride in you, with his belief in your ambition? Has he not summoned your cousin, Mr. Vernon, for the obvious purpose of favoring a suit which he considers worthy of you, and which, if successful, will unite the two branches of his ancient house? How is it possible that he can ever hear without a scorn and indignation which would be fatal to your fortunes, that your heart has presumed to choose, in William Mainwaring, a man without ancestry or career?"

"Not without career!" interrupted Lucretia, proudly. "Do you think, if you were master of Laughton, that your career would not be more brilliant than that of yon indolent luxurious coxcomb? Do you think that I could have been poor-hearted enough to love you, if I had not recognized in you energies and talents that correspond with my own ambition? For I am ambitious, as you know, and therefore my mind as well as my heart, went with my love for you."

"Ah,. Lucretia! but can Sir Miles St. John see my future rise in my present obscurity?"

"I do not say that he can, or will; but if you love me, we can wait. Do not fear the rivalry of Mr. Vernon. I shall know how to free myself from so tame a peril. We can wait—my uncle is old—his habits preclude the chance of a much longer life—he has already had severe attacks. We are young, dearest Charles," waring: what is a year or two to those who hope?"

Mainwaring's face fell, and a displeasing chill passed through his veins. Could this young creature, her uncle's petted and trusted darling, she who should be the soother of his infirmities, the prop of his age, the sincerest mourner at his grave, weigh coldly thus the chances of his death, and point at once to the altar and the tomb?"

He was saved from the embarrassment of reply by Dalibard's approach.

"More than half an hour absent," said the scholar in his own language, with a smile, and drawing out his watch, he placed it before their eyes; "Do you not think that all will miss you? Do you suppose, Miss Clavering, that your uncle has not, ere this, asked for his fair niece? Come, and forestal him." He offered his arm to Lucretia as he spoke. She hesitated a moment, and then, turning to Mainwaring, held out her hand: he pressed it, though scarcely with a lover's warmth; and as she walked back to the terrace with Dalibard, the young man struck slowly into the opposite direction, and passing by a gate, over a footbridge, that led from the ha-ha into the park, bent his way towards a lake which gleamed below at some distance, half concealed by groves of venerable trees, rich with the prodigal boughs of summer. Meanwhile, as they passed towards the house, Dalibard, still using his native tongue, thus accosted his pupil:—

"You must pardon me if I think more of your interests than you do; and pardon me no less if I encroach on your secrets and alarm your pride. This young man—can you be guilty of the folly of more than a passing caprice for his society? of more than the amusement of playing with his vanity? Even if that be all, beware of entangling yourself in your own meshes."

"You do, in truth, offend me," said Lucretia, with calm haughtiness, "and you have not the right thus to speak to me."

"Not the right," repeated the Provençal, mournfully; "not the right!—then, indeed, I am mistaken in my pupil. Do you conceive that I would have lowered my pride to remain here as a dependent, that conscious of attainments, and perhaps of abilities, that should win their way, even in exile, to distinction, I

itself not ... away my life in these ... not formed in you a deep ... terest; in that interest I ... to warn and counsel you. I ... I saw, in you a mind congenial ... a mind above the frivolities of ... a mind, in short, with the grasp and ... of a man's. You were then but a child; you are scarcely yet a woman; yet have I not given to your intellect the strong food on which the statesmen of Florence fed their pupil princes; or the noble Jesuits, the noble men who were destined to extend the secret empire of the imperishable Loyola?"

"You gave me the taste for a knowledge rare in my sex, I own," answered Lucretia, with a slight tone of regret in her voice; "and in the knowledge you have communicated I felt a charm that, at times, seems to me to be only fatal. You have confounded in my mind evil and good, or, rather, you have left both good and evil as dead ashes, as the dust and cinder of a crucible. You have made intellect the only conscience. Of late, I wish that my tutor had been a village priest?"

"Of late! since you have listened to the pastorals of that meek Corydon?"

"Dare you despise him—and for what? that he is good and honest?"

"I despise him not because he is good and honest, but because he is of the common herd of men, without aim or character. And it is for this youth that you will sacrifice your fortunes, your ambition, the station you were born to fill and have been reared to improve—this youth in whom there is nothing but the lap-dog's merit—sleekness and beauty. Ay, frown,—the frown betrays you — you love him!"

"And if I do?" said Lucretia, raising her tall form to its utmost height, and haughtily facing her inquisitor. "And if I do, what then? Is he unworthy of me? Converse with him, and you will find that the noble form conceals as high a spirit. He wants but wealth; I can give it to him. If his temper is gentle, I can prompt and guide it to fame and power. He, at least, has education, and eloquence, and mind. What has Mr. Vernon?"

"Mr. Vernon, I did not speak of him!"

Lucretia gazed hard upon the Provençal's countenance—gazed with that unpitying air of triumph with which a woman who detects a power over the heart she does not desire to conquer, exults in defeating the reasons that heart appears to her to prompt. "No," she said, in a calm voice, to which the venom of secret irony gave stinging significance—"no, you spoke not of Mr. Vernon; you thought that if I looked round—if I looked nearer—I might have a fairer choice."

"You are cruel—you are unjust," said Dalibard, falteringly. "If I once presumed for a moment, have I repeated my offence? But," he added, hurriedly, "in me—much as you appear to despise me—in me, at least, you would have risked none of the dangers that beset you if you seriously set your heart on Mainwaring."

"You think my uncle would be proud to give my hand to Monsieur Olivier Dalibard?"

"I think and I know," answered the Provençal, gravely, and disregarding the taunt, "that if you had deigned to render me—poor exile that I am!—the most enviable of men, you had still been the heiress of Laughton."

"So you have said and urged," said Lucretia, with evident curiosity in her voice; "yet how, and by what art—wise and subtle as you are—could you have won my uncle's consent?"

"That is my secret," returned Dalibard, gloomily: "and since the madness I indulged is for ever over—since I have so schooled my heart, that nothing, despite your sarcasm, save an affectionate interest which I may call paternal, rests there—let us pass from this painful subject. Oh, my dear pupil, be warned in time! know love for what it really is, in the dark and complicated history of actual life, a brief enchantment, not to be disdained, but not to be considered the all in all. Look round the world, contemplate all those who have married from passion—ten years afterwards, whither has the passion flown? With a few, indeed, where there is community of object and character, new excitements, new aims, and hopes, spring up; and, having first taken root in passion, the passion continues to shoot out in their fresh stems and fibres. But deceive yourself not; there is no such community between you and Mainwaring. What you call his goodness, you will learn hereafter to despise as feeble; and what in reality is your mental power, he soon, too soon, will shudder at as unwomanly and hateful."

"Hold!" cried Lucretia, tremulously. "Hold! and if he does, I shall owe his hate to you—to your lessons—to your deadly influence!"

"Lucretia, no!—the seeds were in you! Can cultivation force from the soil that which it is against the nature of the soil to bear?"

"I will pluck out the weeds! I will transform myself!"

"Child, I defy you!" said the scholar, with a smile, that gave to his face the expression his son had conveyed to it. "I have warned you, and my task is done." With that he bowed, and leaving her, was soon by the side of Sir Miles St. John, and the baronet and his librarian a few moments after, entered the house, and sat down to chess.

But during the dialogues we have sketched, we must not suppose that Sir Miles himself had been so wholly absorbed in the sensual gratification bestowed upon Europe by the immortal Raleigh, as to neglect his guest and kinsman.

"And so, Charley Vernon, it is not the fashion to smoke in Lunnon," (thus Sir Miles pronounced the word, according to the euphuism of his youth, and which, even at that day, still lingered in courtly jargon).

"No, sir. However, to console us, we have most other vices in full force."

"I don't doubt it; they say the Prince's set exhaust life pretty quickly."

"It certainly requires the fortune of an earl and the constitution of a prize-fighter, to live with him."

"Yet methinks, Master Charley, you have neither one nor the other."

"And therefore I see before me, and at no very great distance, the Bench—and a consumption!" answered Vernon, suppressing a slight yawn.

"'Tis a pity; for you had a fine estate properly managed; and, in spite of your faults, you have the heart of a true gentleman. Come, come!"—and the old man spoke with tenderness—"you are young enough yet to reform. A prudent marriage, and a good wife, will save both your health and your acres."

"If you think so highly of marriage, my dear Sir Miles, it is a wonder you did not add to your precepts the value of your example."

"Jackanapes! I had not your infirmities! I never was a spendthrift, and I have a constitution of iron!" There was a pause. "Charles," continued Sir Miles, musingly, "there is many an earl with a less fortune than the conjoined estates of Vernon Grange and Laughton Hall. You must already have understood me—it is my intention to leave my estates to Lucretia—it is my wish, nevertheless, to think you will not be the worse for my will. Frankly, if you can like my niece, win her; settle here while I live, put the Grange to nurse, and recruit yourself by fresh air and field-sports. Zounds, Charles, I love you, and that's the truth!—Give me your hand!"

"And a grateful heart with it, sir," said Vernon, warmly, evidently affected, as he started from his indolent position, and took the hand extended to him. "Believe me, I do not covet your wealth, nor do I envy my cousin anything so much as the first place in your regard."

"Prettily said, my boy; and I don't suspect you of insincerity. What think you, then, of my plan?"

Mr. Vernon seemed embarrassed; but, recovering himself with his usual ease, he replied archly, "Perhaps, sir, it will be of little use to know what I think of your plan; my fair cousin may have upset it already."

"Ha, sir, let me look at you—so—so!—you are not jesting. What the deuce do you mean? Gad, man, speak out!"

"Do you not think that Mr. Monderling—Mandolin—what's his name—eh?—do you not think that he is a very handsome young fellow?" said Mr. Vernon, drawing out his snuff-box, and offering it to his kinsman.

"Damn your snuff," quoth Sir Miles, in great choler, as he rejected the proffered courtesy with a vehemence that sent half the contents of the box upon the joint eyes and noses of the two cannie favorites dozing at his feet. The setter started up in an agony—the spaniel wheezed and sniffled, and ran off, stopping every moment to take his head between his paws. The old gentleman continued, without heeding the sufferings of his dumb friends—a sympton of rare discomposure on his part:

"Do you mean to insinuate, Mr. Vernon, that my niece—my elder niece, Lucretia Clavering—condescends to notice the looks, good or bad, of Mr. Mainwaring? 'Sdeath, sir, he is the son of a land-agent! Sir, he is intended

for trade! Sir, his highest ambition is to be partner in some fifth-rate mercantile house!"

"My dear Sir Miles," replied Mr. Vernon, as he continued to brush away, with his scented handkerchief, such portions of the prince's mixture, as his nankin inexpressibles had diverted from the sensual organs of Dash and Ponto—"my dear Sir Miles, *ça n'empêche pas le sentiment!*"

"*Empêche* the fiddlestick! You don't know Lucretia. There are many girls, indeed, who might not be trusted near any handsome flute-playing spark, with black eyes and white teeth; but Lucretia is not one of those; she has spirit and ambition that would never stoop to a *mésalliance;* she has the mind and will of a queen—old Queen Bess, I believe."

"That is saying much for her talents, sir; but if so, Heaven help her intended! I am duly grateful for the blessings you propose me!"

Despite his anger, the old gentleman could not help smiling.

"Why, to confess the truth, she is hard to manage; but we, men of the world, know how to govern women, I hope—much more how to break in a girl scarce out of her teens. As for this fancy of yours, it is sheer folly—Lucretia knows my mind. She has seen her mother's fate; she has seen her sister an exile from my house—why? for no fault of hers, poor thing! but because she is the child of disgrace, and the mother's sin is visited on the daughter's head. I am a good-natured man, I fancy, as men go; but I am old-fashioned enough to care for my race. If Lucretia demeaned herself to love, to encourage, that lad—why, I would strike her from my will, and put your name where I have placed hers."

"Sir," said Vernon, gravely, and throwing aside all affectation of manner, "this becomes serious; and I have no right even to whisper a doubt by which it now seems I might benefit. I think it imprudent, if you wish Miss Clavering to regard me impartially as a suitor to her hand, to throw her, at her age, in the way of a man far superior to myself, and to most men, in personal advantages—a man more of her own years, well educated, well mannered, with no evidence of his inferior birth in his appearance or his breeding. I have not the least ground for supposing that he has made the slightest impression on Miss Clavering, and if he has, it would be, perhaps, but a girl's innocent and thoughtless fancy, easily shaken off by time and worldly reflection: but pardon me, if I say bluntly, that should that be so, you would be wholly unjustified in punishing, even in blaming her—it is yourself you must blame for your own carelessness, and that forgetful blindness to human nature and youthful emotions, which, I must say, is the less pardonable in one who has known the world so intimately."

"Charles Vernon," said the old baronet, "give me your hand, again! I was right, at least, when I said you had the heart of a true gentleman. Drop this subject for the present. Who has just left Lucretia yonder?"

"Your *protegé*—the Frenchman."

"Ah, *he*, at least, is not blind—go, and join Lucretia!"

Vernon bowed, emptied the remains of the Madeira into a tumbler, drank the contents at a draught, and sauntered towards Lucretia; but she, perceiving his approach, crossed abruptly into one of the alleys that led to the other side of the house; and he was either too indifferent, or too well-bred, to force upon her the companionship which she so evidently shunned. He threw himself at length upon one of the benches in the lawn, and, leaning his head upon his hand, fell into reflections, which, had he spoken, would have shaped themselves somewhat thus into words:—

"If I must take that girl as the price of this fair heritage, shall I gain or lose? I grant that she has the finest neck and shoulders I ever saw out of marble; but far from being in love with her, she gives me a feeling like fear and aversion. Add to this, that she has evidently no kinder sentiment for me than I for her; and if she once had a heart, that young gentleman has long since coaxed it away. Pleasant auspices, these, for matrimony, to a poor invalid, who wishes at least to decline and to die in peace! Moreover, if I were rich enough to marry as I pleased—if I were what, perhaps, I ought to be, heir to Laughton—why, there is a certain sweet Mary in the world, whose eyes are softer than Lucretia Clavering's: but that is a dream! On the other hand, if I do not win this girl, and my poor kinsman give her all or nearly all his possessions, Vernon Grange goes to the usurers, and the King will find a lodging for myself. What does it matter? I cannot live above

two or three years at the most, and can only hope, therefore, that dear stout old Sir Miles may outlive me. At thirty-three I have worn out fortune and life; little pleasure could Laughton give me; brief pain the Bench. Fore Gad, the philosophy of the thing is on the whole against sour looks and the noose!" Thus deciding in the progress of his reverie, he smiled, and changed his position. The sun had set—the twilight was over—the moon rose in splendor from amidst a thick copse of mingled beech and oak; the beams fell full on the face of the muser, and the face seemed yet paler, and the exhaustion of premature decay yet more evident by that still and melancholy light—all ruins gain dignity by the moon. This was a ruin nobler than that which painters place on their canvas—the ruin, not of stone and brick, but of humanity and spirit; the wreck of man, prematurely old, not stricken by great sorrow, not bowed by great toil, but fretted and mined away by small pleasures and poor excitements—small and poor, but daily, hourly, momently at their gnome-like work. Something of the gravity and the true lesson of the hour and scene, perhaps, forced itself upon a mind little given to sentiment, for Vernon rose languidly, and muttered—

"My poor mother hoped better things from me. It is well, after all, that it is broken off with Mary! Why should there be any one to weep for me? I can the better die smiling, as I have lived."

Meanwhile, as it is necessary we should follow each of the principal characters we have introduced through the course of an evening more or less eventful in the destiny of all, we return to Mainwaring, and accompany him to the lake at the bottom of the park, which he reached as its smooth surface glistened in the last beams of the sun. He saw, as he neared the water, the fish sporting in the pellucid tide, the dragon-fly darted and hovered in the air; the tedded grass beneath his feet, gave forth the fragrance of crushed thyme and clover; the swan paused, as if slumbering on the wave; the linnet and finch sang still from the neighboring copses; and the heavy bees were winging their way home with a drowsy murmur; all around were images of that unspeakable peace which Nature whispers to those attuned to her music; all fitted to lull, but not to deject the spirit; images dear to the holiday of the world-worn man, to the contemplation of serene and retired age; to the boyhood of poets; to the youth of lovers. But Mainwaring's step was heavy, and his brow clouded; and Nature that evening was dumb to him. At the margin of the lake stood a solitary angler, who now (his evening's task done) was employed in leisurely disjointing his rod, and whistling with much sweetness an air from one of Isaak Walton's songs. Mainwaring reached the angler, and laid his hand on his shoulder:

"What sport, Ardworth?"

"A few large roach with the fly, and one pike with a gudgeon—a noble fellow!—look at him! He was lying under the reeds yonder; I saw his green back, and teased him into biting. A heavenly evening! I wonder you did not follow my example and escape from a set, where neither you nor I can feel very much at home, to this green banquet of Nature, in which at least no man sits below the salt-cellar. The birds are an older family than the St. John's; but they don't throw their pedigree in our teeth, Mainwaring."

"Nay, nay, my good friend, you wrong old Sir Miles; proud he is, no doubt, but neither you nor I have had to complain of his insolence."

"Of his insolence! certainly not--of his condescension, yes! Hang it, William, it is his very politeness that galls me. Don't you observe, that with Vernon, or Lord A——, or Lord B——, or Mr. C——, he is easy and offhand, calls them by their names, pats them on the shoulder, rates them, and swears at them if they vex him; but with you and me and his French parasite, it is all stately decorum and punctilious courtesy:—'Mr. Mainwaring, I am delighted to see you;' 'Mr. Ardworth, as you are so near, dare I ask you to ring the bell;' 'Mons. Dalibard, with the utmost deference, I venture to disagree with you.' However, don't let my foolish susceptibility ruffle your pride. And you, too, have a worthy object in view, which might well detain you from roach and jack-fish. Have you stolen your interview with the superb Lucretia?"

"Yes, stolen, as you say: and like all, thieves not thoroughly hardened, I am ashamed of my gains."

"Sit down, my boy, this is a bank in ten thousand; there—that old root to lean your

elbow on, this soft moss for your cushion; sit down and confess. You have something on your mind that preys on you: we are old college friends—out with it!"

"There is no resisting you, Ardworth," said Mainwaring, smiling, and drawn from his reserve and his gloom by the frank good-humor of his companion: "I should like, I own, to make a clean breast of it; and perhaps I may profit by your advice. You know, in the first place, that after I left College, my father seeing me indisposed for the church, to which he had always destined me in his own heart, and for which, indeed, he had gone out of his way to maintain me at the University, gave me the choice of his own business as a surveyor and land-agent, or of entering into the mercantile profession. I chose the latter, and went to Southampton, where we have a relation in business, to be initiated into the elementary mysteries. There I became acquainted with a good clergyman and his wife, and in that house I passed a great part of my time."

"With the hope, I trust, on better consideration, of gratifying your father's ambition, and learning how to starve with gentility on a cure."

"Not much of that, I fear."

"Then the clergyman had a daughter?"

"You are nearer the mark now," said Mainwaring, coloring; "though it was not his daughter; a young lady lived in his family, not even related to him; she was placed there with a certain allowance by a rich relation. In a word, I admired, perhaps I loved this young person; but she was without an independence, and I not yet provided even with the substitute of money, a profession. I fancied (do not laugh at my vanity) that my feelings might be returned. I was in alarm for her as well as myself; I sounded the clergyman as to the chance of obtaining the consent of her rich relation, and was informed that he thought it hopeless. I felt I had no right to invite her to poverty and ruin, and still less to entangle further (if I had chanced to touch at all) her affection. I made an excuse to my father to leave the town, and returned home."

"Prudent and honorable enough, so far; unlike me, I should have run off with the girl, if she loved me, and old Plutus, the rascal, might have done his worst against Cupid. But I interrupt you."

"I came back when the county was greatly agitated: public meetings, speeches, mobs—a sharp election going on. My father had always taken keen interest in politics; he was of the same party as Sir Miles, who, you know, is red-hot upon politics. I was easily led—partly by ambition, partly by the effect of example, partly by the hope to give a new turn to my thoughts—to make an appearance in public."

"And a devilish creditable one, too. Why, man, your speeches have been quoted with rapture by the London papers. Horridly aristocratic and Pittish, it is true;—I think differently; but every man to his taste. Well——"

"My attempts such as they were, procured me the favor of Sir Miles. He had long been acquainted with my father, who had helped him in his own elections years ago. He seemed cordially delighted to patronize the son: he invited me to visit him at Laughton, and hinted to my father that I was formed for something better than a counting-house: my poor father was intoxicated. In a word, here I am—here, often for days almost weeks together, have I been,—a guest, always welcomed."

"You pause. This is the primordium—now comes the confession, eh?"

"Why one half the confession is over. It was my most unmerited fortune to attract the notice of Miss Clavering. Do not fancy me so self-conceited as to imagine that I should ever have persumed so high, but for——"

"But for encouragement—I understand! Well, she is a magnificent creature in her way; and I do not wonder that she drove the poor little girl at Southampton out of your thoughts."

"Ah! but there is the sore—I am not sure that she has done so. Ardworth, I may trust you?"

"With everything but half-a-guinea. I would not promise to be rock against so great a temptation;" and Ardworth turned his empty pockets inside out.

"Tush—be serious!—or I go."

"Serious! With pockets like these, the devil's in it if I am not serious. *Perge, precor.*"

"Ardworth, then," said Mainwaring, with great emotion, "I confide to you the secret trouble of my heart. This girl at Southampton is Lucretia's sister—her half-sister: the

rich relation on whose allowance she lives is Sir Miles St. John."

"Whew!—my own poor dear little cousin, by the father's side! Mainwaring, I trust you have not deceived me; you have not amused yourself with breaking Susan's heart—for a heart, and an honest, simple, English girl's heart, she has."

"Heaven forbid!—I tell you I have never even declared my love—and if love it were, I trust it is over. But when Sir Miles was first kind to me, first invited me, I own I had the hope to win his esteem, and since he had always made so strong and cruel a distinction between Lucretia and Susan, I thought it not impossible that he might consent at last to my union with the niece he had refused to receive and acknowledge. But even while the hope was in me, I was drawn on—I was entangled—I was spell-bound—I know not how or why; but, to close my confidence, while still doubtful whether my own heart is free from the remembrance of the one sister, I am pledged to the other."

Ardworth looked down gravely and remained silent. He was a joyous, careless, reckless youth, with unsteady character and pursuits—and with something of vague poetry, much of unaccommodating pride about his nature—one of those youths little likely to do what is called well in the world—not persevering enough for an independent career—too blunt and honest for a servile one. But it was in the very disposition of such a person to judge somewhat harshly of Mainwaring's disclosure, and not easily to comprehend what, after all, was very natural—how a young man, new to life, timid by character, and of an extreme susceptibility to the fear of giving pain, had, in the surprise, the gratitude, the emotion, of an avowed attachment from a girl, far above him in worldly position, been forced by receiving, to seem, at least, to return her affection. And indeed though not wholly insensible to the brilliant prospects opened to him in such a connection, yet, to do him justice, Mainwaring would have been equally entangled, by a similar avowal, from a girl more his equal in the world. It was rather from an amiability bordering upon weakness, than from any more degrading moral imperfections, that he had been betrayed into a position which neither contented his heart, nor satisfied his conscience.

With far less ability than his friend, Ardworth had more force and steadiness in his nature, and was wholly free from that morbid delicacy of temperament to which susceptible and shy persons owe much of their errors and misfortunes. He said, therefore, after a long pause, "My good fellow, to be plain with you, I cannot say that your confession has improved you in my estimation; but that is perhaps because of the bluntness of my understanding. I could quite comprehend your fogetting Susan (and, after all, I am left in doubt as to the extent of her conquest over you), for the very different charms of her sister. On the other hand, I could still better understand, that having once fancied Susan, you could not be commanded into love for Lucretia. But I do not comprehend your feeling love for one, and making love to the other—which is the long and short of the business."

"That is not exactly the true statement," answered Mainwaring, with a powerful effort at composure. "There are moments when, listening to Lucretia, when charmed by that softness which, contrasting the rest of her character, she exhibits to none but me, struck by her great mental powers, proud of an unsought triumph over such a being, I feel as if I could love none but her; then, suddenly, her mood changes—she utters sentiments that chill and revolt me—the pure beauty seems vanished from her face. I recall, with a sigh, that simple sweetness of Susan, and I feel as if I deceived both my mistress and myself. Perhaps, however, all the circumstances of this connection tend to increase my doubts. It is humilating to me to know that I woo clandestinely and upon sufferance, that I am stealing, as it were, into a fortune, that I am eating Sir Miles's bread, and yet counting upon his death; and this shame in myself may make me unconsciously unjust to Lucretia. But it is useless to reprove me for what is past; and though I at first imagined you could advise me for the future, I now see, too clearly, that no advice could avail."

"I grant that, too—for all you require, is to make up your mind to be fairly off with the old love, or fairly on with the new. However, now you have stated your case thus frankly, if you permit me, I will take advantage of the strange chance of finding myself here, and watch, ponder, and counsel, if I can. This

Lucretia, I own it, puzzles and perplexes me; but, though no Œdipus, I will not take fright at the Sphynx. I suppose now it is time to return. They expect some of the neighbors to drink tea, and I must doff my fishing-jacket. Come!"

As they strolled towards the house, Ardworth broke a silence which had lasted for some moments:

"And how is that dear good Fielden? I ought to have guessed him at once, when you spoke of your clergyman and his young charge: but I did not know he was at Southampton."

"He has exchanged his living for a year, on account of his wife's health, and rather, I think also, with the wish to bring poor Susan nearer to Laughton, in the chance of her uncle seeing her. But you are, then acquainted with Fielden?"

"Acquainted!—my best friend. He was my tutor, and prepared me for Caius College. I owe him not only the little learning I have, but the little good that is left in me. I owe to him apparently, also, whatever chance of bettering my prospects may arise from my visit at Laughton."

"Notwithstanding our intimacy, we have, like most young men not related, spoken so little of our family matters, that I do not now understand how you are cousin to Susan; nor what, to my surprise and delight, brought you hither three days ago."

"Faith, my story is easier to explain than your own, William! Here goes!"

But as Ardworth's recital partially involves references to family matters, not yet sufficiently known to the reader, we must be pardoned if we assume to ourselves his task of narrator, and necessarily enlarge on his details.

The branch of the illustrious family of St. John, represented by Sir Miles, diverged from the parent stem of the Lords of Bletshoe. With them it placed at the summit of its pedigree the name of William de St. John, the Conqueror's favorite and trusted warrior, and Oliva de Filgiers. With them it blazoned the latter alliance, which gave to Sir Oliver St. John the lands of Bletshoe by the hand of Margaret Beauchamp, (by her second marriage with the Duke of Somerset, grandmother to Henry VII). In the following generation, the younger son of a younger son had founded, partly by offices of state, partly by marriage with a wealthy heiress, a house of his own; and in the reign of James the First, the St. Johns of Laughton ranked amongst the chief gentlemen of Hampshire. From that time till the accession of George III., the family, though it remained untitled, had added to its consequence by inter-marriages of considerable dignity, chosen, indeed, with a disregard for money uncommon amongst the English aristocracy, so that the estate was but little enlarged since the reign of James, though profiting, of course, by improved cultivation and the different value of money. On the other hand, perhaps there were scarcely ten families in the country who could boast of a similar directness of descent on all sides, from the proudest and noblest aristocracy of the soil: and Sir Miles St. John, by blood, was, almost at the distance of eight centuries, as pure a Norman as his ancestral William.

His grandfather, nevertheless, had deviated from the usual disinterested practice of the family, and had married an heiress, who brought the quarterings of Vernon to the crowded escutcheon, and with these quarterings an estate of some £4000 a year, popularly known by the name of Vernon Grange. This rare occurrence did not add to the domestic happiness of the contracting parties, nor did it lead to the ultimate increase of the Laughton possessions. Two sons were born. To the elder was destined the father's inheritance—to the younger the maternal property. One house is not large enough for two heirs. Nothing could exceed the pride of the father as a St. John, except the pride of the mother as a Vernon. Jealousies between the two sons began early, and rankled deep; nor was there peace at Laughton till the younger had carried away from its rental the lands of Vernon Grange; and the elder remained just where his predecessors stood in point of possessions—sole lord of Laughton sole. The elder son, Sir Miles's father, had been, indeed, so chafed by the rivalry with his brother, that in disgust he had run away, and thrown himself, at the age of fourteen, into the navy. By accident or by merit he rose high in that profession, acquired name and fame, and lost an eye and an arm,—for which he was gazetted, at the same time, an admiral and a baronet.

Thus mutilated and dignified, Sir George St. John retired from the profession; and finding

himself unmarried, and haunted by the apprehension that if he died childless, Laughton would pass to his brother's heirs, he resolved upon consigning his remains to the nuptial couch, previous to the surer peace of the family vault. At the age of fifty-nine, the grim veteran succeeded in finding a young lady of unblemished decent, and much marked with the small-pox, who consented to accept the only hand which Sir George had to offer. From this marriage sprang a numerous family; but all died in early childhood, frightened to death, said the neighbors, by their tender parents (considered the ugliest couple in the county), except one boy (the present Sir Miles) and one daughter, many years younger, destined to become Lucretia's mother. Sir Miles came early into his property; and although the softening advance of civilization, with the liberal effects of travel, and a long residence in cities, took from him that provincial austerity of pride, which is only seen in stanch perfection amongst the lords of a village, he was yet little less susceptible to the duties of maintaining his lineage pure as its representation had descended to him, than the most supurb of his predecessors.

But owing, it was said, to an early disappointment, he led, during youth and manhood, a roving and desultory life, and so put off from year to year the grand experiment matrimonial, until he arrived at old age, with the philosophical determination to select from the other branches of his house the successor to the heritage of St. John. In thus arrogating to himself a right to neglect his proper duties as head of a family, he found his excuse in adopting his niece Lucretia. His sister had chosen for her first husband a friend and neighbor of his own, a younger son, of unexceptionable birth, and of very agreeable manners in society. But this gentleman contrived to render her life so miserable, that, though he died fifteen months after their marriage, his widow could scarcely be expected to mourn long for him. A year after Mr. Clavering's death, Mrs. Clavering married again, under the mistaken notion that she had the right to choose for herself. She married Dr. Mivers, the provincial physician who had attended her husband in his last illness—a gentleman by education, manners, and profession, but unhappily the son of a silk-mercer. Sir Miles never forgave this connection. By her first marriage, Sir Miles's sister had one daughter, Lucretia; by her second marriage, another daughter, named Susan. She survived somewhat more than a year the birth of the latter: on her death, Sir Miles formally (through his agent) applied to Dr. Mivers for his eldest niece, Lucretia Clavering, and the physician did not think himself justified in withholding from her the probable advantages of a transfer from his own roof to that of her wealthy uncle.

He himself had been no worldly gainer by his connection; his practice had suffered materially from the sympathy which was felt by the county families for the supposed wrongs of Sir Miles St. John, who was personally not only popular, but esteemed, nor less so on account of his pride: too dignified to refer even to his domestic annoyances, except to his most familiar associates—to them, indeed, Sir Miles had said briefly, that he considered a physician who abused his entrance into a noble family by stealing into its alliance, was a character in whose punishment all society had an interest. The words were repeated; they were thought just. Those who ventured to suggest that Mrs. Clavering, as a widow, was a free agent, were regarded with suspicion. It was the time when French principles were just beginning to be held in horror, especially in the provinces, and when everything that encroached upon the rights and prejudices of the high-born was called "a French principle." Dr. Mivers was as much scouted as if he had been a *sans-culotte*. Obliged to quit the county, he settled at a distance; but he had a career to commence again; his wife's death enfeebled his spirits, and damped his exertions. He did little more than earn a bare subsistence, and died at last, when his only daughter was fourteeen, poor and embarrrassed.

On his death bed he wrote a letter to Sir Miles, reminding him that, after all, Susan was his sister's child, gently vindicating himself from the unmerited charge of treachery which had blasted his fortunes, and left his orphan penniless; and closing with a touching, yet a manly appeal to the sole relative left to befriend her. The clergyman who had attended him in his dying moments took charge of this letter; he brought it in person to Laughton, and delivered it to Sir Miles. Whatever his errors, the old baronet was no

common man. He was not vindictive, though he could not be called forgiving. He had considered his conduct to his sister a duty owed to his name and ancestors; she had placed herself and her youngest child out of the pale of his family. He would not receive as his niece the granddaughter of a silk-mercer. The relationship was extinct, as, in certain countries, nobility is forfeited by a union with an inferior class. But, niece or not, here was a claim to humanity and benevolence; and never yet had appeal been made by suffering to his heart and purse in vain.

He bowed his head over the letter as his eye came to the last line, and remained silent so long, that the clergyman, at last, moved and hopeful, approached and took his hand. It was the impulse of a good man and a good priest. Sir Miles looked up in surprise; but the calm pitying face bent on him, repelled all return of pride.

"Sir," he said, tremulously, and he pressed the hand that grasped his own, "I thank you. I am not fit at this moment to decide what to do: to-morrow, you shall know. And the man died poor? not in want, not in want?"

"Comfort yourself, worthy sir; he had, at the last, all that sickness and death require, except one assurance, which I ventured to whisper to him—I trust not too rashly—that his daughter would not be left unprotected. And I pray you to reflect, my dear sir, that——"

Sir Miles did not wait for the conclusion of the sentence; he rose abruptly, and left the room. Mr. Fielden (so the good priest was named) felt confident of the success of his mission; but, to win it the more support, he sought Lucretia. She was then seventeen: it is an age when the heart is peculiarly open to the household ties—to the memory of a mother—to the sweet name of sister. He sought this girl, he told his tale, and pleaded the sister's cause. Lucretia heard in silence; neither eye nor lip betrayed emotion; but her color went and came. This was the only sign that she was moved: moved, but how? Fielden's experience in the human heart could not guess. When he had done, she went quietly to her desk (it was in her own room that the conference took place)—she unlocked it with a deliberate hand—she took from it a pocket-book and a case of jewels, which Sir Miles had given her on her last birth-day. "Let my sister have these—while I live she shall not want!"

"My dear young lady, it is not these things that she asks from you; it is your affection, your sisterly heart, your intercession with her natural protector; these, in her name, I ask for—*non gemmis neque purpurâ venale, nec auro!*"

Lucretia then, still without apparent emotion, raised to the good man's face, deep, penetrating, but unrevealing eyes, and said slowly:—

"Is my sister like my mother, who, they say, was handsome?"

Much startled by this question, Fielden answered—"I never saw your mother, my dear; but your sister gives promise of more than common comeliness."

Lucretia's brows grew slightly compressed. "And her education has been, of course, neglected?"

"Certainly, in some points—mathematics, for instance, and theology. But she knows what ladies generally know—French and Italian, and such like. Dr. Mivers was not unlearned in the polite letters. Oh, trust me, my dear young lady, she will not disgrace your family; she will justify your uncle's favor. Plead for her!"—and the good man clasped his hands.

Lucretia's eyes fell musingly on the ground; but she resumed, after a short pause.

"What does my uncle himself say?"

"Only that he will decide to-morrow."

"I will see him;" and Lucretia left the room as for that object. But when she had gained the stairs, she paused at the large embayed casement, which formed a niche in the landing-place, and gazed over the broad domains beyond; a stern smile settled, then, upon her lips; the smile seemed to say—"In this inheritance I will have no rival."

Lucretia's influence with Sir Miles was great; but here it was not needed. Before she saw him he had decided on his course. Her precocious, and apparently intuitive knowledge of character, detected, at a glance, the safety with which she might intercede. She did so, and was chid into silence.

The next morning, Sir Miles took the priest's arm, and walked with him into the gardens.

"Mr. Fieldon," he said, with the air of a man who has chosen his course, and deprecates all attempt to make him swerve from it, "if I followed my own selfish wishes, I should take home this poor child. Stay, sir, and hear me—I am no hypocrite, and I speak honestly—I like young faces—I have no family of my own;—I love Lucretia, and I am proud of her, but a girl brought up in adversity might be a better nurse, and a more docile companion—let that pass. I have reflected, and I feel that I cannot set to Lucretia—set to children unborn—the example of indifference to a name degraded and a race adulterated: you may call this pride, or prejudice—I view it differently. There are duties due from an individual, duties due from a nation, duties due from a family; as my ancestors thought, so think I. They left me the charge of their name, as the fiefrent by which I hold their lands. 'Sdeath, sir! pardon me the the expletive!—I was about to say, that if I am now a childless old man, it is because I have myself known temptation, and resisted. I loved, and denied myself what I believed my best chance of happiness, because the object of my attachment was not my equal—that was a bitter struggle—I triumphed, and I rejoice at it, though the result was to leave all thoughts of wedlock elsewhere odious and repugnant. These principles of action have made a part of my creed as gentleman, if not as Christian—now, to the point. I beseech you to find a fitting and reputable home for Miss—Miss Mivers (the lips lightly curled as the name was said)—I shall provide suitably for her maintenance. When she marries, I will dower her, provided only, and always, that her choice fall upon one who will not still further degrade her lineage on her mother's side,—in a word, if she select a *gentleman*. Mr. Fielden, on this subject I have no more to say."

In vain the good clergyman, whose very conscience, as well as reason, was shocked by the deliberate and argumentive manner with which the baronet had treated the abandonment of his sister's child as an absolutely moral, almost religious duty,—in vain he exerted himself to repel such sophisms, and put the matter in its true light. It was easy for him to move Sir Miles's heart—*that* was ever gentle—*that* was moved already; but the crotchet in his head was impregnable. The more touchingly he painted poor Susan's unfriended youth, her sweet character, and promising virtues, the more Sir Miles St. John considered himself a martyr to his principles, and the more obstinate in the martyrdom he became. "Poor thing! poor child!" he said often, and brushed a tear from his eyes; "a thousand pities! Well, well, I hope she will be happy! Mind, money shall never stand in the way if she have a suitable offer!" This was all the worthy clergyman, after an hour's eloquence, could extract from him. Out of breath, and out of patience, he gave in at last; and the baronet, still holding his reluctant arm, led him back towards the house. After a prolonged pause, Sir Miles said abruptly: "I have been thinking that I may have unwittingly injured this man—this Mivers—while I deemed only that he injured me. As to reparation to his daughter, that is settled; and, after all, though I do not publicly acknowledge her, she is half my own niece."

"Half?"

"Half—the father's side don't count, of course; and, rigidly speaking, the relationship is, perhaps, forfeited on the other. However, that half of it I grant. Zooks, sir, I say I grant it!—I beg you ten thousand pardons for my vehemence. To return, perhaps I can show at least that I bear no malice to this poor doctor. He has relations of his own—silk-mercers—trade has reverses. How are they off?"

Perfectly perplexed by this very contradictory and paradoxical, yet, to one better acquainted with Sir Miles, very characteristic benevolence, Fielden was some time before he answered. "Those members of Dr. Mivers's family who are in trade are sufficiently prosperous; they have paid his debts; *they*, Sir Miles, will receive his daughter."

"By no means!" cried Sir Miles, quickly; then recovering himself, he added, "or, if you think that advisable, of course all interference on my part is withdrawn."

"*Festina lente!*—not so quick, Sir Miles. I do not yet say that it is advisable—not because they are silk-mercers, the which, I humbly conceive, is no sin to exclude them from gratitude for their proffered kindness, but because Susan, poor child! having been brought up in different habits, may feel a little strange, at least at first, with ——"

"Strange, yes; I should hope so!" interrupted Sir Miles, taking snuff with much energy; "and, by the way, I am thinking that it would be well if you and Mrs. Fielden—you are married, sir?—that is right—clergymen all marry!—if you and Mrs. Fielden would take charge of her yourselves, it would be a great comfort to me to think her so well placed. We differ, sir—but I respect you. Think of this. Well, then, the doctor has left no relations that I can aid in any way."

"Strange man!" muttered Fielden. "Yes; I must not let one poor youth lose the opportunity offered by your—your——"

"Never mind what—proceed — one poor youth; in the shop, of course?

"No; and by his father's side (since you so esteem such vanities) of an ancient family—a sister of Dr. Mivers married Captain Ardworth."

"Ardworth—a goodish name—Ardworth, of Yorkshire.

"Yes, of that family. It was, of course, an imprudent marriage, contracted while he was only an ensign. His family did not reject him, Sir Miles."

"Sir, Ardworth is a good squire's family, but the name is Saxon; there is no difference in race between the head of the Ardworths, if he were a duke, and my gardener, John Hodge—Saxon and Saxon, both. *His* family did not reject him—go on."

"But he was a younger son in a large family—both himself and his wife have known all the distresses common, they tell me, to the poverty of a soldier, who has no resource but his pay. They have a son; Dr. Mivers—though so poor himself—took this boy, for he loved his sister dearly, and meant to bring him up to his own profession. Death frustrated this intention. The boy is high-spirited and deserving."

"Let his education be completed—send him to the university; and I will see that he is put into some career, of which his father's family would approve. You need not mention to any one my intentions in this respect, not even to the lad. And now, Mr. Fielden, I have done my duty—at least, I think so. The longer you honor my house, the more I shall be pleased and grateful; but this topic, allow me most respectfully to say, needs and bears no further comment. Have you seen the last news from the army?"

"The army!—oh, fie, Sir Miles, I must speak one word more—may not my poor Susan have, at least, the comfort to embrace her sister?"

Sir Miles mused a moment, and struck his crutch-stick thrice firmly on the ground.

"I see no great objection to that; but, by the address of this letter, the poor girl is too far from Laughton to send Lucretia to her."

"I can obviate that objection, Sir Miles. It is my wish to continue to Susan her present home amongst my own children—my wife loves her dearly; and had you consented to give her the shelter of your own roof, I am sure I should not have seen a smile in the house for a month after. If you permit this plan, as indeed you honored me by suggesting it, I can pass through Southampton, on my way to my own living in Devonshire, and Miss Clavering can visit her sister there."

"Let it be so," said Sir Miles, briefly; and so the conversation closed.

Some weeks afterwards, Lucretia went in her uncle's carriage, with four post-horses, with her maid and her footman—went in the state and pomp of heiress to Laughton—to the small lodging house in which the kind pastor crowded his children and his young guest. She stayed there some days. She did not weep when she embraced Susan—she did not weep when she took leave of her; but she showed no want of actual kindness, though the kindness was formal and stately. On her return, Sir Miles forbore to question; but he looked as if he expected, and would willingly permit, her to speak on what might naturally be uppermost at her heart. Lucretia, however, remained silent, till at last the baronet coloring, as if ashamed of his curiosity, said—

"Is your sister like your mother?"

"You forget, sir, I can have no recollection of my mother."

"Your mother had a strong family likeness to myself."

"She is not like you—they say she is like Dr. Mivers."

"Oh!" said the baronet, and he asked no more. The sisters did not meet again: a few letters passed between them, but the correspondence gradually ceased.

Young Ardworth went to college, prepared by Mr. Fielden, who was no ordinary scholar, and an accurate and profound mathematician

—a more important requisite than classical learning in a tutor for Cambridge. But Ardworth was idle, and perhaps even dissipated. He took a common degree, and made some debts, which were paid by Sir Miles, without a murmur. A few letters then passed between the baronet and the clergyman, as to Ardworth's future destiny: the latter owned that his pupil was not persevering enough for the bar, nor steady enough for the church.

These were no great faults in Sir Miles's eyes. He resolved, after an effort, to judge himself of the capacities of the young man, and so came the invitation to Laughton. Ardworth was greatly surprised when Fielden communicated to him this invitation, for hitherto he had not conceived the slightest suspicion of his benefactor—he had rather, and naturally, supposed that some relation of his father's had paid for his maintenance at the university; and he knew enough of the family history to look upon Sir Miles as the proudest of men. How was it, then, that he who would not receive the daughter of Dr. Mivers, his own niece, would invite the nephew of Dr. Mivers, who was no relation to him? However, his curiosity was excited, and Fielden was urgent that he should go;—to Laughton, therefore, had he gone.

We have now brought down, to the opening of our narrative, the general records of the family it concerns; we have reserved our account of the rearing and the character of the personage most important, perhaps, in the development of its events—Lucretia Clavering; in order to place singly before the reader, the portrait of the dark, misguided, and ill-boding youth.

CHAPTER II.

Lucretia.

When Lucretia first came to the house of Sir Miles St. John, she was an infant about four years old. The baronet then lived principally in London, with occasional visits rather to the Continent or a watering place, than to his own family mansion. He did not pay any minute attention to his little ward—satisfied that her nurse was sedulous, and her nursery airy and commodious. When at the age of seven, she began to interest him, and he himself, approaching old age, began seriously to consider, whether he should select her as his heiress, for hitherto he had not formed any decided or definite notions on the matter—he was startled by a temper so vehement, so self-willed and sternly imperious, so obstinately bent upon attaining its object, so indifferently contemptuous of warning, reproof, coaxing, or punishment, that her governess honestly came to him in despair.

The management of this unmanageable child interested Sir Miles. It caused him to think of Lucretia seriously; it caused him to have her much in his society, and always in his thoughts; the result was, that by amusing and occupying him, she forced a stronger hold on his affections than she might have done had she been more like the ordinary run of commonplace children. Of all dogs, there is no dog that so attaches a master as a dog that snarls at everybody else,—that no other hand can venture to pat with impunity; of all horses, there is none which so flatters the rider, from Alexander downwards, as a horse that nobody else can ride. Extend this principle to the human species, and you may understand why Lucretia became so dear to Sir Miles St. John—she got at his heart through his vanity. For though, at times, her brow darkened, and her eye flashed even at his remonstrance, she was yet no sooner in his society than she made a marked distinction between him and the subordinates, who had hitherto sought to control her. Was this affection?—he thought so. Alas, what parent can trace the workings of a child's mind—springs moved by an idle word from a nurse—a whispered conference between hirelings! Was it possible that Lucretia had not often been menaced, as the direst evil that could befall her, with her uncle's displeasure; that long before she could be sensible of mere worldly loss or profit, she was not impressed with a vague sense of Sir Miles's power over her fate; nay, when trampling, in childish wrath and scorn, upon some menial's irritable feelings, was it possible that she had not been told that, but for Sir Miles, she would be little better than a servant herself?

Be this as it may, all weakness is prone to dissimulate: and rare and happy is the child whose feelings are as pure and transparent as the fond parent deems them. There is something in children, too, which seems like an

instinctive deference to the aristocratic appearances which sway the world. Sir Miles's stately person—his imposing dress, the respect with which he was surrounded—all tended to beget notions of superiority and power, to which it was no shame to succumb, as it was to Miss Black, the governess, whom the maids answered pertly, or Martha, the nurse, whom Miss Black snubbed if Lucretia tore her frock.

Sir Miles's affection once won—his penetration not perhaps blinded to her more evident faults, but his self-love soothed towards regarding them leniently—there was much in Lucretia's external gifts which justified the predilection of the haughty man. As a child, she was beautiful, and, perhaps, from her very imperfections of temper, her beauty had that air of distinction which the love of command is apt to confer. If Sir Miles was with his friends when Lucretia swept into the room, he was pleased to hear them call her their little "princess," and pleased yet more at a certain dignified tranquillity with which she received their caresses or their toys, and which he regarded as the sign of a superior mind: nor was it long, indeed, before what we call a superior mind developed itself in the young Lucretia. All children are quick till they are set methodically to study; but Lucretia's quickness defied even that numbing ordeal, by which half of us are rendered dunces. Rapidity and precision in all the tasks set to her,—in the comprehension of all the explanations given to her questions, evinced singular powers of readiness and reasoning.

As she grew older, she became more reserved and thoughtful. Seeing but few children of her own age, and mixing intimately with none, her mind was debarred from the usual objects which distract the vivacity, the restless and wondrous observation, of childhood. She came in and out of Sir Miles's library of a morning, or his drawing room of an evening till her hour for rest, with unquestioned and sometimes unnoticed freedom; she listened to the conversation around her, and formed her own conclusions unchecked. It has a great influence upon a child, whether for good or for evil, to mix early and habitually with those grown up—for good to the mere intellect always—the evil depends upon the character and discretion of those the child sees and hears—"Reverence the greatest is due to children," exclaimed the wisest of the Romans;* that is so say that we must revere the candor and inexperience and innocence of their minds.

Now Sir Miles's habitual associates were persons of the world; well-bred and decorous, indeed, before children, as the best of the old school were—avoiding all anecdotes, all allusions, for which the prudent matron would send her girls out of the room; but, with that reserve, speaking of the world as the world goes; if talking of young A—, calculating carelessly what he would have when old A—, his father, died—naturally giving to wealth, and station, and ability, their fixed importance in life—not over-apt to single out for eulogium some quiet goodness, rather inclined to speak with irony of pretensions to virtue—rarely speaking but with respect of the worldly seemings which rule mankind;—all these had their inevitable effect upon that keen, quick, yet moody and reflective intellect.

Sir Miles removed at last to Laughton. He gave up London—why, he acknowledged not to himself; but it was because he had outlived his age—most of his old set were gone—new hours, new habits had stolen in. He had ceased to be of importance as a marrying man, as a personage of fashion; his health was impaired; he shrank from the fatigues of a contested election; he resigned his seat in Parliament for his native county, and, once settled at Laughton, the life there soothed and flattered him—there, all his former claims to distinction were still fresh. He amused himself by collecting, in his old halls and chambers, his statues and pictures, and felt that, without fatigue or trouble, he was a greater man at Laughton in his old age, than he had been in London during his youth.

Lucretia was then thirteen. Three years afterwards, Olivier Dalibard was established in the house, and from that time a great change became noticeable in her. The irregular vehemence of her temper gradually subsided, and was replaced by an habitual self-command, which rendered the rare deviations from it more effective and imposing. Her pride changed its character wholly and permanently; no word, no look of scorn to the low-born and the poor escaped her. The masculine studies

* Cicero. The sentiment is borrowed by Juvenal.

which her erudite tutor opened to a grasping and inquisitive mind, elevated her very errors above the petty distinctions of class. She imbibed earnestly what Dalibard assumed or felt,—the more dangerous pride of the fallen angel,—and set up the intellect as a deity All belonging to the mere study of mind charmed and enchained her; but active and practical in her very reveries, if she brooded, it was to scheme, to plot, to weave web and mesh, and to smile in haughty triumph at her own ingenuity and daring. The first lesson of mere worldly wisdom teaches us to command temper; it was worldly wisdom that made the once impetus girl calm, tranquil, and serene. Sir Miles was pleased by a change that removed from Lucretia's outward character its chief blot: perhaps, as his frame declined, he sighed sometimes to think that with so much majesty there appeared but little tenderness; he took, however, the merits with the faults, and was content upon the whole.

If the Provençal had taken more than common pains with his young pupil, the pains were not solely disinterested. In plunging her mind amidst that profound corruption which belongs only to intellect cultivated in scorn of good, and in suppression of heart, he had his own views to serve. He watched the age when the passions ripen; and he grasped at the fruit which his training sought to mature. In the human heart ill regulated there is a dark desire for the forbidden. This Lucretia felt—this her studies cherished, and her thoughts brooded over. She detected, with the quickness of her sex, the Preceptor's stealthy aim. She started not at the danger. Proud of her mastery over herself, she rather triumphed in luring on into weakness this master-intelligence which had lighted up her own,—to see her slave in her teacher—to despise or to pity him whom she had first contemplated with awe. And with this mere pride of the understanding might be connected that of the sex; she had attained the years when woman is curious to know and to sound her power. To inflame Dalibard's cupidity or ambition was easy; but to touch his *heart*—that marble heart!—this had its dignity and its charm. Strange to say, she succeeded.

The passion, as well as interests, of this dangerous and able man became enlisted in his hopes; and now the game played between them had a terror in its suspense; for if Dalibard penetrated not into the recesses of his pupil's complicated nature, she was far from having yet sounded the hell that lay black and devouring beneath his own. Not through her affections—those he scarce hoped for—but through her inexperience, her vanity, her passions, he contemplated the path to his victory over her soul and her fate. And so resolute, so wily, so unscrupulous was this person who had played upon all the subtlest keys and chords in the scale of turbulent life, that, despite the lofty smile with which Lucretia at length heard and repelled his suit, he had no fear of the ultimate issue,—when all his projects were traversed,—all his mines and stratagems abruptly brought to a close, by an event which he had wholly unforseen—the appearance of a rival; the ardent and almost purifying love, which, escaping awhile from all the demons he had evoked, she had, with a girl's frank heart and impulse, conceived for Mainwaring.

And here, indeed, was the great crisis in Lucretia's life and destiny. So interwoven with her nature had become the hard calculations of the understanding; so habitual to her now was the zest for scheming, which revels in the play and vivacity of intrigue and plot, and which Shakespeare has, perhaps, intended chiefly to depict in the villany of Iago, that it is probable Lucretia could never become a character thoroughly amiable and honest. But with a happy and well-placed love, her ambition might have had legitimate vents; her restless energies, the woman's natural field in sympathies for another. The heart once opened softens by use; gradually and unconsciously the interchange of affection, the companionship with an upright and ingenious mind (for virtue is not only beautiful; it is contagious) might have had their redeeming and hallowing influence. Happier, indeed, had it been, if her choice had fallen upon a more commanding and lofty nature. But perhaps it was the very meekness and susceptibility of Mainwaring's temper, relieved from feebleness by his talents, which, once in play, were undeniably great, that pleased her by contrast with her own hardness of spirit and depotism of will.

That Sir Miles should have been blind to the position of the lovers, is less disparaging to his penetration than it may appear; for the

very imprudence with which Lucretia abandoned herself to the society of Mainwaring during his visits at Laughton, took a resemblance to candor. Sir Miles knew his niece to be more than commonly clever and well informed; that she, like him, should feel that the conversation of a superior young man was a relief to the ordinary babble of their country neighbors was natural enough; and if now and then a doubt, a fear, had crossed his mind, and rendered him more touched than he liked to own by Vernon's remarks, it had vanished upon perceiving that Lucretia never seemed a shade more pensive in Mainwaring's absence. The listlessness and the melancholy which are apt to accompany love, especially where unpropitiously placed, were not visible on the surface of this strong nature. In truth, once assured that Mainwaring returned her affection, Lucretia reposed on the future with a calm and resolute confidence; and her customary dissimulation closed like an unruffled sea over all the under-currents that met and played below.

Still Sir Miles's attention once, however slightly, aroused to the recollection that Lucretia was at the age when woman naturally meditates upon love and marriage, had suggested, afresh and more vividly, a project which had before been indistinctly conceived — viz., the union of the divided branches of his house, by the marriage of the last male of the Vernons with the heiress of the St. Johns. Sir Miles had seen much of Vernon himself, at various intervals: he had been present at his christening, though he had refused to be his godfather, for fear of raising undue expectations; he had visited and munificently "tipped" him at Eton; he had accompanied him to his quarters when he joined the Prince's regiment; he had come often in contact with him, when, at the death of his father, Vernon retired from the army and blazed in the front ranks of metropolitan fashion; he had given him counsel and had even lent him money. Vernon's spendthrift habits, and dissipated if not dissolute life, had certainly confirmed the old baronet in his intentions to trust the lands of Laughton to the lesser risk which property incurs in the hands of a female, if tightly settled on her, than in the more colossal and multiform luxuries of an expensive man; and to do him justice, during the flush of Vernon's riotous career, he had shrunk from the thought of confiding the happiness of his niece to so unstable a partner.

But of late, whether from his impaired health, or his broken fortunes, Vernon's follies had been less glaring. He had now arrived at the mature age of thirty-three, when wild oats may reasonably be sown. The composed and steadfast character of Lucretia, might serve to guide and direct him: and Sir Miles was one of those who hold the doctrine that a reformed rake makes the best husband; add to this, there was nothing in Vernon's reputation (once allowing that his thirst for pleasure was slaked) which could excite serious apprehensions. Through all his difficulties, he had maintained his honor unblemished; a thousand traits of amiability and kindness of heart made him popular and beloved. He was nobody's enemy but his own. His very distresses—the prospect of his ruin, if left unassisted by Sir Miles's testamentary dispositions—were arguments in his favor. And, after all, though Lucretia was a nearer relation, Vernon was in truth the direct male heir, and, according to the usual prejudices of family, therefore, the fitter representative of the ancient line. With these feelings and views, he had invited Vernon to his house, and we have seen already that his favorable impressions had been confirmed by the visit.

And here, we must say, that Vernon himself had been brought up in boyhood and youth to regard himself the presumptive inheritor of Laughton. It had been, from time immemorial, the custom of the St. Johns to pass by the claims of females in the settlement of the entails: from male to male the estate had gone —furnishing warriors to the army, and senators to the state. And if when Lucretia first came to Sir Miles's house, the bright prospect seemed somewhat obscured, still the *mésalliance* of the mother, and Sir Miles's obstinate resentment thereat, seemed to warrant the supposition that he would probably only leave to the orphan the usual portion of a daughter of the house, and that the lands would go in their ordinary destination. This belief, adopted passively, and as a thing of course, had had a very prejudicial effect upon Vernon's career. What mattered that he over-enjoyed his youth, that the subordinate property of the Vernons, a paltry four or five thousand pounds a year,

went a little too fast—the splendid estates of Laughton would recover all.

From this dream he had only been awakened two or three years before, by an attachment he had formed to the portionless daughter of an earl; and the Grange being too far encumbered to allow him the proper settlements which the lady's family required, it became a matter of importance to ascertain Sir Miles's intentions. Too delicate himself to sound them, he had prevailed upon the earl, who was well acquainted with Sir Miles, to take Laughton in his way to his own seat in Dorsetshire, and, without betraying the grounds of his interest in the question, learn carelessly, as it were, the views of the wealthy man. The result had been a severe and terrible disappointment. Sir Miles had then fully determined upon constituting Lucretia his heiress, and, with the usual openness of his character, he had plainly said so, upon the very first covert and polished allusion to the subject, which the earl slily made. This discovery, in breaking off all hopes of an union with Lady Mary Stanville, had crushed more than mercenary expectations. It affected, through his heart, Vernon's health and spirits; it rankled deep and was resented at first as a fatal injury.

But Vernon's native nobility of disposition gradually softened an indignation which his reason convinced him was groundless and unjust. Sir Miles had never encouraged the expectations, which Vernon's family and himself had unthinkingly formed. The baronet was master of his own fortune, and after all was it not more natural that he should prefer the child he had brought up and reared, to a distant relation, little more than an acquaintance, simply because man succeeded to man in the mouldy pedigree of the St. Johns? And, Mary fairly lost to him, in his constitutional indifference to money, a certain French levity of temper, a persuasion that his life was nearing its wasted close, had left him without regret, as without resentment, at his kinsman's decision. His boyish affection for the hearty, generous old gentleman returned, and though he abhorred the country, he had without a single interested thought or calculation, cordially accepted the baronet's hospitable overtures, and deserted, for the wilds of Hampshire, "the sweet shady side of Pall Mall."

We may now enter the drawing-room at Laughton, in which were [illegible] the several of the families resid[illegible] immediate neighborhood, and dropped in to chat around the [illegible] table, play a rubber at whist, or m[illegible] the help of two or three children an[illegible] three grandpapas, a merry country [illegible] For, in that happy day, people were much more sociable than they are now, in the houses of our rural Thanes. Our country seats became bustling and animated after the Birthday; many even of the more important families resided, indeed, all the year round on their estates. The Continent was closed to us; the fastidious exclusiveness which comes from habitual residence in cities, had not made that demarcation in castes and in talk, between neighbor and neighbor, which exists now. Our squires were less educated, less refined, but more hospitable and unassuming. In a word, there was what does not exist now, except in some districts remote from London,—a rural society for those who sought it.

The party, as we enter, is grouped somewhat thus—but first, we must cast a glance at the room itself, which rarely failed to be the first object to attract a stranger's notice. It was a long, and not particularly well-proportioned apartment, according, at least, to modern notions, for it had rather the appearance of two rooms thrown into one. At the distance of about thirty-five feet, the walls, before somewhat narrow, were met by an arch, supported by carved pilasters, which opened into a space nearly double the width of the previous part of the room, with a domed ceiling, and an embaved window of such depth, that the recess almost formed a chamber in itself. But both these divisions of the apartment corresponded exactly in point of decoration; they had the same small panelling, painted a very light green, which seemed almost white by candle-light, each compartment wrought with an arabesque, the same enriched frieze and cornice; they had the same high mantelpieces, ascending to the ceiling, with the arms of St. John in bold relief. They had, too, the same old-fashioned and venerable furniture, draperies of thick figured velvet, with immense chairs and sofas to correspond, interspersed, it is true, with more modern and commodious inventions of the upholster's art, in grave stuffed leather, or lively chintz.

Two windows, nearly as deep as that in the further division, broke the outline of the former one, and helped to give that irregular and *nooky* appearance to the apartment, which took all discomfort from its extent, and furnished all convenience for solitary study or detached flirtation. With little respect for the carved work of the panels, the walls were covered with pictures brought by Sir Miles from Italy; here and there marble busts and statues gave lightness to the character of the room, and harmonized well with that half-Italian mode of decoration which belongs to the period of James the First. The shape of the chamber, in its divisions, lent itself admirably to that friendly and sociable intermixture of amusements which reconciles the tastes of young and old. In the first division, near the fire-place, Sir Miles, seated in his easy chair, and sheltered from the opening door by a sevenfold tapestry screen, was still at chess with his librarian. At a little distance, a middle-aged gentleman, and three turbaned matrons, were cutting in at whist—shilling points—with a half-crown bet, optional, and not much ventured on.

On tables, drawn into the recesses of the windows, were the day's newspapers, Gilray's caricatures, the last new publications, and such other ingenious suggestions to chit-chat. And round these tables grouped those who had not yet found elsewhere their evening's amusement; two or three shy young clergymen, the parish doctor, four or five squires, who felt great interest in politics, but never dreamt of the extravagance of taking in a daily paper, and who now, monopolizing all the journals they could find, began fairly with the heoric resolution to skip nothing. from the first advertisement to the printer's name. Amidst one of these groups, Mainwaring had bashfully ensconced himself. In the further division, the chandelier, suspended from the doomed ceiling, threw its cheerful light over a large circular table below, on which gleamed the ponderous tea-urn of massive silver, with its usual accompaniments.

Nor were wanting there, in addition to those airy nothings, sliced infinitesimally, from a French roll, the more substantial, and now exiled cheer, of cakes—plum and seed, Yorkshire and saffron—attesting the light hand of the housekeeper, and the strong digestion of the guests. Round this table were seated, in full gossip, the maids and the matrons, with a slight sprinkling of the bolder young gentleman who had been taught to please the fair. The warmth of the evening allowed the upper casement to be opened and the curtains drawn aside, and the July moonlight feebly struggled against the blaze of the lights within. At this table it was Miss Clavering's obvious duty to preside; but that was a complaisance to which she rarely condescended. Nevertheless, she had her own way of doing the honor of her uncle's house, which was not without courtesy and grace; to glide from one to the other, exchange a few friendly words, see that each set had its well-known amusements, and, finally, sit quietly down to converse with some who, from gravity or age, appeared most to neglect, or be neglected by the rest, was her ordinary, and not unpopular mode of welcoming the guests at Laughton—not unpopular, for she thus avoided all interference with the flirtations and conquests of humbler damsels, whom her station and her endowments might otherwise have crossed or humbled, while she ensured the good word of the old, to whom the young are seldom so attentive.

But if a stranger of more than provincial repute chanced to be present, if some stray member of parliament, or barrister on the circuit, ar wandering artist, accompanied any of the neighbors, to him Lucretia gave more earnest and undivided attention. Him she sought to draw into a conversation deeper than the usual babble, and with her calm, searching eyes, bent on him while he spoke, seemed to fathom the intellect she set in play. But as yet, this evening, she had not made her appearance—a sin against etiquette very unusual in her. Perhaps her recent conversation with Dalibard had absorbed her thoughts to forgetfulness of the less important demands on her attention. Her absence had not interfered with the gaiety at the tea-table, which was frank even to noiseness; as it centered round the laughing face of Ardworth, who, though unknown to most or all of the ladies present, beyond a brief introduction to one or two of the first comers from Sir Miles (as the host had risen from his chess to bid them welcome), had already contrived to make himself perfectly at home, and outrageously popular.

Niched between two bouncing lasses, he had

commenced acquaintance with them in a strain of familiar drollery and fun, which had soon broadened its circle, and now embraced the whole group in the happy contagion of good humor and young animal spirits. Gabriel, allowed to sit up later than his usual hour, had not, as might have been expected, attached himself to this circle, nor indeed to any; he might be seen moving quietly about—now contemplating the pictures on the wall with a curious eye—now pausing at the whist table, and noting the game with the interest of an embryo gamester—now throwing himself on an ottoman, and trying to coax towards him Dash or Ponto—trying in vain, for both the dogs abhorred him; yet still, through all this general movement, had any one taken the pains to observe him closely, it might have been sufficiently apparent that his keen, bright, restless eye, from the corner of its long sly lids, roved chiefly towards the three persons whom he approached the least—his father, Mainwaring, and Mr. Vernon.

This last had ensconced himself apart from all, in the angle formed by one of the pilasters of the arch that divided the room, so that he was in command, as it were, of both sections. Reclined, with the careless grace that seemed inseparable from every attitude and motion of his person, in one of the great velvet chairs, with a book in his hand, which, to say truth, was turned upside down, but in the lecture of which he seemed absorbed—he heard at one hand the mirthful laughter that circled round young Ardworth, or, in its pauses, caught on the other side, muttered exclamations from the grave whist-players—"If you had but trumped that diamond, ma'am!"—"Bless me, sir, it was the best heart!" And somehow or other, both the laughter and the exclamations affected him alike, with what then was called "the spleen"—for the one reminded him of his own young days of joyless, careless mirth, of which his mechanical gaiety now was but a mocking ghost, and the other seemed a satire, a parody, on the fierce but noiseless rapture of gaming, through which his passions had passed—when thousands had slipped away with a bland smile, provoking not one of those natural ebullitions of emotion which there accompanied the loss of a shilling point. And besides this, Vernon had been so accustomed to the success of the drawing-room, to be a somebody and a something in the company of wits and princes, that he felt, for the first time, a sense of insignificance in this provincial circle. Those fat squires had heard nothing of Mr. Vernon, except that he would not have Laughton—he had no acres, no vote in their county—he was a nobody to them. Those ruddy maidens, though now and then, indeed, one or two might steal an admiring glance at a figure of eloquence so unusual, regarded him not with the female interest he had been accustomed to inspire. They felt instinctively that he could be nothing to them, nor they to him—a mere London fop, and not half so handsome as Squires Bluff and Chuff.

Rousing himself from this little vexation to his vanity, with a conscious smile at his own weakness, Vernon turned his looks towards the door, waiting for Lucretia's entrance, and since her uncle's address to him, feeling that new and indescribable interest in her appearance, which is apt to steal into every breast, when what was before but an indifferent acquaintance, is suddenly enhaloed with the light of a possible wife. At length, the door opened, and Lucretia entered. Mr. Vernon lowered his book, and gazed with an earnestness that partook both of doubt and admiration.

Lucretia Clavering was tall—tall beyond what is admitted to be tall in woman; but in her height there was nothing either awkward or masculine—a figure more perfect never served for model to a sculptor. The dress at that day, unbecoming as we now deem it, was not to her—at least, on the whole—disadvantageous. The short waist gave greater sweep to her majestic length of limb, while the classic thinness of the drapery betrayed the exact proportion and the exquisite contour. The arms then were worn bare almost to the shoulder, and Lucretia's arms were not more faultless in shape than dazzling in their snowy color—the stately neck, the falling shoulders, the firm, slight, yet rounded bust—all would have charmed equally the artist and the sensualist. Fortunately, the sole defect of her form was not apparent at a distance: that defect was in the hand; it had not the usual faults of female youthfulness—the superfluity of flesh, the too rosy healthfulness of color; on the contrary, it was small and thin, but it was, nevertheless, more the hand of a man than a woman; the shape had a man's nervous

distinctness, the veins swelled like sinews, the joints of the fingers were marked and prominent. In that hand, it almost seemed as if the iron force of the character betrayed itself.

But as we have said, this slight defect which few, if seen, would hypercritically notice, could not of course be perceptible as she moved slowly up the room; and Vernon's eye, glancing over the noble figure rested upon the face. Was it handsome?—was it repelling? Strange that in feature it had pretentions to the highest order of beauty, and yet, even that experienced connoisseur in female charms was almost puzzled what sentence to pronounce. The hair, as was the fashion of the day, clustered in profuse curls over the forehead, but could not conceal a slight line or wrinkle between the brows; and this line, rare in women at any age, rare even in men at hers, gave an expression at once of thought and sternness to the whole face. The eyebrows themselves were straight, and not strongly marked,—a shade or two perhaps too light, a fault still more apparent in the lashes; the eyes were large, full, and, though bright, astonishingly calm and deep, at least in ordinary moments; yet withal they wanted the charm of that steadfast and open look, which goes at once to the heart, and invites its trust; their expression was rather vague and abstracted. She usually looked aslant when she spoke, and this, which with some appears but shyness, in one so self-collected, had an air of falsehood. But when, at times, if earnest, and bent rather on examining those she addressed than guarding herself from penetration, she fixed those eyes upon you with sudden and direct scrutiny, the gaze impressed you powerfully, and haunted you with a strange spell. The eye itself was of a pecullar and displeasing color—not blue, nor gray, nor black, nor hazel, but rather of that cat-like green, which is drowsy in the light, and vivid in the shade. The profile was purely Greek, and so seen, Lucretia's beauty seemed incontestable; but in front face, and still more when inclined between the two, all the features took a sharpness, that, however regular, had something chilling and severe; the mouth was small, but the lips were thin and pale, and had an expression of effort and contraction, which added to the distrust that her sidelong glance was calculated to inspire. The teeth were dazzling white, but sharp and thin, and the eye-teeth were much longer than the rest. The complexion was pale, but without much delicacy; the paleness seemed not natural to it, but rather that hue which study and late vigils give to men; so that she wanted the freshness and bloom of youth, and looked older than she was—an effect confirmed by an absence of roundness in the cheek, not noticeable in the profile, but rendering the front face somewhat harsh as well as sharp.

In a word, the face and the figure were not in harmony; the figure prevented you from pronouncing her to be masculine—the face took from the figure the charm of feminacy. It was the head of the young Augustus upon the form of Agrippina. One touch more, and we close a description, which already perhaps the reader may consider frivolously minute. If you had placed before the mouth and lower part of the face a mask or bandage, the whole character of the upper face would have changed at once; the eye lost its glittering falseness, the brow its sinister contraction; you would have pronounced the face not only beautiful, but sweet and womanly. Take that bandage suddenly away, and the change would have startled you, and startled you the more, because you could detect no sufficient defect or disproportion in the lower part of the countenance to explain it. It was as if the mouth was the key to the whole: the key *nothing* without the text, the text, uncomprehended without the key.

Such, then, was Lucretia Clavering in outward appearance, at the age of twenty—striking to the most careless eye—interesting and perplexing the student in that dark language, never yet deciphered,—the human countenance. The reader must have observed, that the effect of every face that he remarks for the first time produces, is different from the impression it leaves upon him when habitually seen. Perhaps, no two persons differ more from each other, than does the same countenance in our earliest recollection of it from the countenance regarded in the familiarity of repeated intercourse. And this was especially the case with Lucretia Clavering's; the first impulse of nearly all who beheld it was distrust that partook of fear; it almost inspired you with a sense of danger. The judgment

rose up against it; the heart set itself on its guard. But this uneasy sentiment soon died away with most observers, in admiration at the chiselled outline, which, like the Grecian sculpture, gained the more the more it was examined; in respect for the intellectual power of the expression; and in fascinated pleasure at the charm of a smile, rarely employed it is true, but the more attractive, both for that reason and for its sudden effect in giving brightness and persuasion to an aspect that needed them so much. It was literally like the abrupt breaking out of a sunbeam; and the repellent impression of the face, thus familiarized away, the matchless form took its natural influence; so that, while one who but saw Lucretia for a moment, might have pronounced her almost plain, and certainly not prepossessing in appearance, those with whom the lived, those whom she sought to please, those who saw her daily, united in acknowledgment of her beauty; and if they still felt awe, atributed it only to the force of her understanding.

As she now came midway up the room, Gabriel started from his seat, and ran to her caressingly. Lucretia bent down, and placed her hand upon his fair locks. As she did so, he whispered—

"Mr. Vernon has been watching for you."

"Hush! Where is your father?"

"Behind the screen, at chess with Sir Miles."

"With Sir Miles!" and Lucretia's eye fell with the direct gaze we have before referred to, upon the boy's face.

"I have been looking over them pretty often," said he, meaningly: "they have talked of nothing but the game."

Lucretia lifted her head, and glanced round with her furtive eye; the boy divined the search, and with a scarce perceptible gesture, pointed her attention to Mainwaring's retreat. Her vivid smile passed over her lips, as she bowed slightly to her lover, and then withdrawing the hand which Gabriel had taken in his own, she moved on, passed Vernon with a commonplace word or two, and was soon exchanging greetings with the gay merry-makers in the farther part of the room. A few minutes afterwards, the servants entered, the tea-table was removed, chairs thrust back—a single lady of a certain age volunteered her services at the piano, and dancing began within the ample space which the arch fenced off from the whist-players. Vernon had watched his opportunity, and at the first sound of the piano had gained Lucretia's side, and with grave politeness pre-engaged her hand for the opening dance.

At that day, though it is not so very long ago, gentlemen were not ashamed to dance, and to dance well; it was no languid saunter through a quadrille; it was fair, deliberate, skilful dancing, amongst the courtly; free, bounding movement amongst the gay.

Vernon, as might be expected, was the most admired performer of the evening; but he was thinking very little of the notice he at last excited; he was employing such ingenuity as his experience of life supplied to the deficiencies of a very imperfect education, limited to the little flogged into him at Eton, in deciphering the character and getting the heart of his fair partner.

"I wonder you do not make Sir Miles take you to London, my cousin, if you will allow me to call you so. You ought to have been presented."

"I have no wish to go to London yet."

"Yet!" said Mr. Vernon, with the somewhat *fade* gallantry of his day; "beauty even like yours has little time to spare."

"Hands across, hands across!" cried Mr. Ardworth.

"And," continued Mr. Vernon, as soon as a pause was permitted to him, "there is a song which the Prince sings, written by some sensible old-fashioned fellow, which says—

> 'Gather your rosebuds while ye may,
> For Time is still a-flying.'"

"You have obeyed the moral of the song yourself, I believe, Mr. Vernon."

"Call me cousin, or Charles—Charley, if you like—as most of my friends do: nobody ever calls me Mr. Vernon; I don't know myself by that name."

"Down the middle, we are all waiting for you," shouted Ardworth.

And down the middle with wondrous grace glided the exquisite nankins of Carley Vernon.

The dance now, thanks to Ardworth, became too animated and riotous to allow more than a few broken monosyllables till Vernon and his partner gained the end of the set, and then, flirting his partner's fan, he recommenced—

"Seriously, my cousin, you must sometimes feel very much moped here."

"Never!" answered Lucretia. Not once yet had her eye rested on Mr. Vernon. She felt that she was sounded.

"Yet I am sure you have a taste for the pomps and vanities. Aha! there is ambition under those careless curls," said Mr. Vernon, with his easy adorable impertinence.

Lucretia winced.

"But if I were ambitious, what field for ambition could I find in London?"

"The same as Alexander—empire, my cousin."

"You forget that I am not a man. Man, indeed, may hope for an empire. It is something to be a Pitt, or even a Warren Hastings."

Mr. Vernon stared. Was this stupidity, or what?

"A woman has an empire more undisputed than Mr. Pitt's, and more pitiless than that of Governor Hastings."

"Oh pardon me, Mr. Vernon——"

"Charles, if you please."

Lucretia's brow darkened.

"Pardon me," she repeated; "but these compliments, if such they are meant to be, meet a very ungrateful return. A woman's empire over gauzes and ribbons, over tea-tables and drums, over fops and coquettes, is not worth a journey from Laughton to London."

"You think you can despise admiration?"

"What you mean by admiration—yes."

"And love, too?" said Vernon, in a whisper.

Now Lucretia at once and abruptly raised her eyes to her partner. Was he aiming at her secret?—was he hinting at intentions of his own? The look chilled Vernon, and he turned away his head.

Suddenly, then, in pursuance of a new train of ideas, Lucretia altered her manner to him. She had detected what before she had surmised. This sudden familiarity on his part arose from notions her uncle had instilled—the visitor had been incited to become the suitor. Her penetration into character, which from childhood had been her passionate study, told her that on that light, polished, fearless nature, scorn would have slight effect—to meet the familiarity would be the best means to secure a friend, to disarm a wooer. She changed then her manner: she summoned up her extraordinary craft: she accepted the intimacy held out to her, not to unguard herself, but to lay open her opponent. It became necessary to her to know this man, to have such power as the knowledge might give her, insensibly and gradually she led her companion away from his design of approaching her own secrets or character, into frank talk about himself. All unconsciously he began to lay bare to his listener the infirmities of his erring, open heart. Silently she looked down, and plumbed them all: the frivolity, the recklessness, the half gay, half mournful sense of waste and ruin. There, blooming amongst the wrecks, she saw the fairest flowers of noble manhood, profuse and fragrant still—generosity and courage, and disregard for self. Spendthrift and gambler, on one side the medal; gentleman and soldier, on the other. Beside this maimed and imperfect nature, she measured her own prepared and profound intellect, and as she listend, her smile became more bland and frequent. She could afford to be gracious; she felt superiority, scorn, and safety.

As this seeming intimacy had matured, Vernon and his partner had quitted the dance, and were conversing apart in the recess of one of the windows, which the newspaper readers had deserted, in the part of the room where Sir Miles and Dalibard, still seated, were about to commence their third game at chess. The baronet's hand ceased from the task of arranging his pawns, his eye was upon the pair, and then, after a long and complacent gaze, it looked round without discovering the object it sought.

"I am about to task your kindness most improperly, Monsieur Dalibard," said Sir Miles, with that politeness so displeasing to Ardworth, "but will you do me the favor to move aside that fold of the screen. I wish for a better view of our young people. Thank you very much."

Sir Miles now discovered Mainwaring, and observed that far from regarding with self-betraying jealousy the apparent flirtation going on between Lucretia and her kinsman, he was engaged in animated conversation with the chairman of the quarter sessions. Sir Miles was satisfied, and ranged his pawns

All this time, and indeed ever since they sat down to play, the Provençal had been waiting with the patience that belong to his character, for some observation from Sir Miles on the subject, which his sagacity perceived was engrossing his thoughts. There had been about the old gentleman a fidgety restlessness, which showed that something was on his mind. His eyes had been frequently turned towards his niece since her entrance; once or twice he had cleared his throat and hemmed,—his usual prelude to some more important communication; and Dalibard had heard him muttering to himself, and fancied he caught the name of "Mainwaring." And indeed the baronet had been repeatedly on the verge of sounding his secretary, and as often had been checked both by pride in himself and pride for Lucretia. It seemed to him beneath his own dignity and hers even to hint to an inferior a fear, a doubt of the heiress of Laughton.

Olivier Dalibard could easily have led on his patron—he could easily, if he pleased it, have dropped words to instil suspicion and prompt question, but that was not his object; he rather shunned than courted any reference to himself upon the matter; for he knew that Lucretia, if she could suppose that he, however indirectly, had betrayed her to her uncle, would at once declare his own suit to her, and so procure his immediate dismissal; while aware of her powers of dissimulation, and her influence over her uncle, he feared that a single word from her would suffice to remove all suspicion in Sir Miles, however ingeniously implanted, and however truthfully grounded. But all the while, under his apparent calm, his mind was busy, and his passions burning.

"Pshaw, your old play—the bishop again!" said Sir Miles, laughing, as he moved a knight to frustrate his adversary's supposed plan; and then turning back, he once more contemplated the growing familiarity between Vernon and his niece. This time he could not contain his pleasure: "Dalibard, my dear sir," he said, rubbing his hands, "look yonder; they would make a handsome couple!"

"Who, sir?" said the Provençal, looking another way, with dogged stupidity.

"Who? damn it, man! nay, pray forgive my ill manners—but I felt glad, sir, and proud sir. Who? Charley Vernon and Lucretia Clavering,"

"Assuredly, yes. Do you think that there is a chance of so happy an event?"

"Why, it depends only on Lucretia; I shall never force her." Here Sir Miles stopped, for Gabriel, unperceived before, picked up his patron's pocket handkerchief.

Oliver Dalibard's grey eyes rested coldly on his son. "You are not dancing to-night, my boy. Go; I like to see you amused."

The boy obeyed at once, as he always did, the paternal commands.—He found a partner, and joined a dance just began; and in the midst of the dance, Honoré Gabriel Varney seemed a new being: not Ardworth himself so thoroughly entered into the enjoyment of the exercise, the lights, the music. With brilliant eyes and dilated nostrils, he seemed prematurely to feel all that is exciting and voluptuous in that exhilaration, which to childhood is usually so innocent. His glances followed the fairest form; his clasp lingered in the softest hand; his voice trembled as the warm breath of his partner came on his cheeks.

Meanwhile, the conversation between the chess-players continued.

"Yes," said the baronet, "it depends only on Lucretia,—and she seems pleased with Vernon; who would not be?"

"Your penetration rarely deceives you, sir. I own I think with you. Does Mr. Vernon know that you would permit the alliance?"

"Yes; but——" the baronet stopped short.

"You were saying, but — but what, Sir Miles?"

"Why the dog affected diffidence; he had some fear lest he should not win her affections—but luckily, at least, they are disengaged."

Dalibard looked grave, and his eye as if involuntarily, glanced towards Mainwaring. As ill luck would have it, the young man had then ceased his conversation with the chairman of the quarter sessions, and with arms folded, brow contracted, and looks, earnest, anxious, and intent, was contemplating the whispered conference between Lucretia and Vernon.

Sir Miles's eye had followed his secretary's, and his face changed. His hand fell on the chess-board, and upset half the men; he uttered a very audible "Zounds!"

"I think, Sir Miles," said the Provençal, rising as if conscious that Sir Miles wished to play no more—"I think that if you spoke soon

to Miss Clavering, as to your views with regard to Mr. Vernon, it might ripen matters; for I have heard it said by French mothers—and our French women understand the female heart, sir—that a girl having no other affection is often prepossessed at once in favor of a man, whom she knows beforehand is prepared to woo and to win her, whereas without that knowledge, he would have seemed but an ordinary acquaintance."

"It is shrewdly said, my dear Monsieur Dalibard; and for more reasons than one, the sooner I speak to her the better. Lend me your arm—it is time for supper—I see the dance is over."

Passing by the place where Mainwaring still leant, the baronet looked at him fixedly. The young man did not notice the gaze. Sir Miles touched him gently. He started as from a reverie:

"You have not danced, Mr. Mainwaring."

"I dance so seldom, Sir Miles," said Mainwaring, coloring.

"Ah! you employ your head more than your heels, young gentleman; very right—I must speak to you to-morrow. Well, ladies, I hope you have enjoyed yourselves. My dear Mrs. Vesey, you and I are old friends, you know—many a minuet we have danced together, eh! We can't dance now—but we can walk arm in arm together still. Honor me. And your little grandson — vaccinated, eh! Wonderful invention! To supper, ladies—to supper!"

The company were gone. The lights were out, all save the lights of heaven, and they came bright and still through the casements: Moonbeam and Starbeam, they seemed now to have the old house to themselves. In came the rays, brighter and longer and bolder—like fairies that march, rank upon rank, into their kingdom of solitude. Down the oak stairs, from the casements, blazoned with heraldry, moved the rays, creepingly, fearfully. On the armor in the hall clustered the rays boldly and brightly, till the steel shone out like a mirror. In the library, long and low, they just entered, stopped short—it was no place for their play. In the drawing-room, now deserted, they were more curious and adventurous. Through the large window, still open, they came in freely and archly, as if to spy what had caused such disorder; the stiff chairs out of place, the smooth floor despoiled of its carpet—that flower dropped on the ground—that scarf forgotten on the table—the rays lingered upon them all. Up and down, through the house, from the base to the roof, roved the children of the air,—and found but two spirits awake amidst the slumber of the rest.

In that tower to the east—in the tapestry chamber—with the large gilded bed in the recess, came the rays, tamed and wan, as if scared by the grosser light on the table. By that table sat a girl, her brow leaning on one hand; in the other she held a rose—it is a love-token—exchanged with its sister rose, by stealth—in mute sign of reproach for doubt excited—an assurance and a reconciliation. A love-token!—shrink not, ye rays—there is something akin to you in love. But, see, the hand closes convulsively on the flower—it hides it not in the breast—it lifts it not to the lip; it throws it passionately aside. "How long!" muttered the girl, impetuously—"how long! and to think that *will* here cannot shorten an hour!" Then she rose, and walked to and fro, and each time she gained a certain niche in the chamber, she paused, and then irresolutely passed on again. What is in that niche? Only books. What can books teach thee, pale girl? The step treads firmer; this time it halts more resolved. The hand that clasped the flower takes down a volume. The girl sits again before the light. See, oh, rays, what is the volume?

Moon and Starbeam, ye love what lovers read by the lamp in the loneliness. No love-ditty this; no yet holier lesson to patience and moral to hope. What hast thou, yonng girl strong in health and rich in years, with the lore of the leech, — with prognostics, and symptons, and diseases? She is tracing with hard eyes the signs that precede the grim enemy, in his most sudden approach—the habits that invite him, the warnings that he gives. He whose wealth shall make her free, has twice had the visiting shock—he starves not—he lives free! She closes the volume, and, musing, metes him out the hours and days he has to live. Shrink back, ye rays! The love is disenhallowed: while the hand was on the rose the thought was on the charnel.

Yonder, in the opposite tower, in the small casement near the roof, came the rays; Child-

hood is asleep. Moon and Starbeam, ye love the slumbers of the child! The door opens —a dark figure steals noiselessly in. The father comes to look on the sleep of his son. Holy tenderness, if this be all!

"Gabriel, wake!" said a low, stern voice, and a rough hand shook the sleeper.

The sharpest test of those nerves, upon which depends the mere animal courage, is to be roused suddenly in the depth of night, by a violent hand. The impulse of Gabriel, thus startled, was neither of timidity or surprise. It was that of some Spartan boy, not new to danger: with a slight cry, and a fierce spring, the son's hand clutched at the father's throat. Dalibard shook him off with an effort, and a smile half in approval, half in irony, played by the moonlight over his lips.

"Blood will out, young tiger," said he. 'Hush, and hear me!"

"Is it you, father?" said Gabriel; "I thought,—I dreamed——"

"No matter; think — dream always, that man should be prepared for defence from peril!"

"Gabriel, (and the pale scholar seated himself on the bed), turn your face to mine—nearer; let the moon fall on it; lift your eyes —look at me—so! Are you not playing false to me? Are you not Lucretia's spy, while you are pretending to be mine? It is so; your eye betrays you. Now, heed me; you have a mind beyond your years. Do you love best the miserable garret in London, the hard fare and squalid dress,—or your lodgment here, the sense of luxury, the sight of splendor, the atmosphere of wealth? You have the choice before you."

"I choose as you would have me, then," said the boy—"the last."

"I believe you. Attend! you do not love me—that is natural—you are the son of Clara Varney! You have supposed that in loving Lucretia Clavering, you might vex or thwart me, you scarce knew how: and Lucretia Clavering has gold and gifts, and soft words, and promises, to bribe withal. I now tell you openly my plan with regard to this girl: it is my aim to marry her—to be master of this house and these lands. If I succeed you share them with me. By betraying me, word or look, to Lucretia, you frustrate this aim; you plot against our rise and to our ruin. Deem not that you could escape my fall; if I am driven hence—as you might drive me—you share my fate; and, mark me, you are delivered up to my revenge! You cease to be my son —you are my foe. Child! you know me."

The boy, bold as he was, shuddered; but after a pause, so brief that a breath scarce passed between his silence and his words, he replied, with emphasis:

"Father, you have read my heart. I have been persuaded by Lucretia (for she bewitches me), to watch you—at least, when you are with Sir Miles. I knew that this was mixed up with Mr. Mainwaring. Now that you have made me understand your own views, I will be true, to you—true without threats."

The father looked hard on him, and seemed satisfied with the gaze. "Remember, at least, that your future rests upon your truth; *that* is no threat—that is a thought of hope. Now sleep or muse on it." He dropped the curtain which his hand had drawn aside, and stole from the room as noiselessly as he had entered. The boy slept no more. Deceit, and cupidity, and corrupt ambition, were at work in his brain. Shrink back, Moon and Starbeam! On that child's brow play the demons who had followed the father's step to his bed of sleep.

Back to his own room, close at hand, crept Olivier Dalibard. The walls were lined with books—many in language and deep in lore. Moon and Starbeam, ye love the midnight solitude of the scholar! The Provençal stole to the casement, and looked forth. All was serene; breathless trees, and gleaming sculpture, and whitened sward, girdled by the mass of shadow. Of what thought the man? not of the present lovliness which the scene gave to his eye, nor of the future mysteries which the stars should whisper to the soul. Gloomily over a stormy and a hideous past, roved the memory, stored with fraud and foul with crime; plan upon plan, schemed with ruthless wisdom, followed up by remorseless daring, and yet all now a ruin and a blank!—an intellect at war with good, and the good had conquered! But the conviction neither touched the conscience, nor enlightened the reason; he felt, it is true, a moody sense of impotence, but it brought rage, not despondency: it was not that he submitted to Good, as too powerful to oppose, but that he deemed

he had not yet gained all the mastery over the arsenal of Evil. And evil he called it not. Good and Evil to him were but subordinate genii, at the command of Mind; they were the slaves of the lamp.

But had he got at the true secret of the lamp itself? "How is it," he thought, as he turned impatiently from the casement, "that I am baffled here, where my fortunes seemed most assured? Here the mind has been of my own training, and prepared by nature to my hand;—here all opportunity has smiled. And suddenly the merest commonplace, in the vulgar lives of mortals—an unlooked for rival,—rival, too, of the mould I had taught her to despise—one of the stock gallants of a comedy—no character, but youth and fair looks; yea, the lover of the stage starts up, and the fabric of years is overthrown." As he thus mused, he placed his hand upon a small box on one of the tables. "Yet, within this," resumed his soliloquy, and he struck the lid, that gave back a dull sound,—"within this I hold the keys of life and death! Fool, the power does not reach to the heart, except to still it. Verily and indeed were the old heathens mistaken? Are there no philtres to change the current of desire?—but touch one chord in a girl's affection, and all the rest is mine—all—all, lands, station, power—all the rest are in the opening of this lid!"

Hide in the cloud, O Moon!—shrink back, ye Stars! send not your holy, pure, and trouble-lulling light to the countenance blanched and livid with the thoughts of murder.

CHAPTER III.

Conferences.

THE next day Sir Miles did not appear at breakfast; not that he was unwell, but that he meditated holding certain audiences, and on such occasions the good old gentleman liked to prepare himself. He belonged to a school in which, amidst much that was hearty and convivial, there was much also that, now-a-days, would seem stiff and formal, contrasting the other school immediately succeeding him, which Mr. Vernon represented, and of which the Charles Surface of Sheridan is a faithful and admirable type. The room that Sir Miles appropriated to himself was, properly speaking, the state apartment, called, in the old inventories, "King James's chamber;" it was on the first floor, communicating with the picture gallery, which, at the farther end opened upon a corridor, admitting to the principal bed-rooms. As Sir Miles care nothing for holiday state, he had unscrupulously taken his *cubiculum* in this chamber, which was really the handsomest in the house, except the banquet hall; placed his bed in one angle, with a huge screen before it, filled up the space with his Italian antiques and curiosities, and fixed his favorite pictures on the faded gilt leather panelled on the walls.

His main motive in this was the communication with the adjoining gallery, which, when the weather was unfavorable, furnished ample room for his habitual walk. He knew how many strides by the help of his crutch made a mile, and this was convenient. Moreover he liked to look, when alone, on these old portraits of his ancestors, which he had religiously conserved in their places, preferring to thrust his Florentine and Venetian masterpieces into bedrooms and parlors rather than to dislodge from the gallery the stiff ruffs, doublets, and fardingales of his predecessors. It was whispered in the house, that the baronet whenever he had to reprove a tenant, or lecture a dependant, took care to have him brought to his sanctum, through the full length of this gallery, so that the victim might be duly prepared and awed by the imposing effect of so stately a journey, and the grave faces of all the generations of St. John, which could not fail to impress him with the dignity of the family, and alarm him at the prospect of the injured frown of its representative. Across this gallery now, following the steps of the powdered valet, strode young Ardworth; staring now and then at some portrait more than usually grim, more often wondering why his boots that never creaked before, could creak on those particular boards, and feeling a quiet curiosity without the least mixture of fear or awe, as to what old Square-toes intended to say to him.

But all feeling of irreverence ceased when, shown into the baronet's room, and the door closed, Sir Miles rose with a smile and cordially shaking his hand, said, dropping the punctilious courtesy of Mister—"Ardworth,

sir, if I had a little prejudice against you, before you came, you have conquered it. You are a fine manly, spirited fellow, sir; and you have an old man's good wishes, which are no bad beginning to a young man's good fortunes."

The color rushed over Ardworth's forehead, and a tear sprang to his eyes. He felt a rising at his throat, as he stammered out some not very audible reply.

"I wished to see you, young gentleman, that I might judge myself what you would like best, and what would best fit you. Your father is in the army; what say you to a pair of colors?"

"Oh, Sir Miles, that is my utmost ambition! Anything but law, except the church; anything but the church, except a desk and a counter!"

The baronet, much pleased, gave him a gentle pat on the shoulder. "Ha, ha! *we* gentlemen, you see, (for the Ardworths are very well born—very) *we*, *gentlemen*, understand each other! Between you and me, I never liked the law—never thought a man of birth should belong to it—take money for lying—shabby—shocking! Don't let that go any further! The church—Mother Church—I honor her! Church and state go together! But one ought to be very good to preach to others—better than you and I are—eh, eh? ha, ha! Well, then, you like the army—there's a letter for you to the Horse Guards—go up to town—your business is done; and, as for your outfit read this little book at you leisure," And Sir Miles thrust a pocket-book into Ardworth's hand.

"But pardon me," said the young man, much bewildered. "What claim have I, Sir Miles, to such generosity? I know that my uncle offended you."

"Sir, that's the claim!" said Sir Miles, gravely. "I cannot live long!" he added, with a touch of melancholy in his voice; "let me die in peace with all!—perhaps I injured your uncle? Who knows but, if so, he hears and pardons me now?"

"Oh, Sir Miles!" exclaimed the thoughtless, generous-hearted young man, "and my little playfellow, Susan, your own niece!"

Sir Miles drew back haughtily; but the burst that offended him rose so evidently from the heart, was so excusable from its motive, and the youth's ignorance of the world, that his frown soon vanished, as he said, calmly and gravely—

"No man, my good sir, can allow to others the right to touch on his family affairs; I trust I shall be just to the poor young lady; and so, if we never meet again, let us think well of each other. Go, my boy! serve your king and your country!"

"I will do my best, Sir Miles, if only to merit your kindness.

"Stay a moment; you are intimate, I find, with young Mainwaring?"

"An old college friendship, Sir Miles."

"The army will not do for him, eh?"

"He is too clever for it, sir."

"Ah, he'd make a lawyer, I suppose—glib tongue enough! and can talk well,—and lie, if he's paid for it?"

"I don't know how lawyers regard those matters, Sir Miles; but if you don't make him a lawyer, I am sure you must leave him an honest man."

"Really and truly——"

"Upon my honor I think so."

"Good day to you, and good luck. You must catch the coach at the lodge; for, I see by the papers, that, in spite of all the talk about Peace, they are raising regiments like wildfire."

With very different feelings from those with which he had entered the room, Ardworth quitted it. He hurried into his own chamber to thrust his clothes into his portmanteau, and, while thus employed, Mainwaring entered.

"Joy, my dear follow! wish me joy! I am going to town—into the army—abroad to be shot at, thank Heaven! That dear old gentleman!—just throw me that coat, will you?"

A very few more words sufficed to explain what had passed to Mainwaring; he sighed when his friend had finished: "I wish I were going with you!"

"Do you? Sir Miles has only got to write another letter to the Horse Guards; but no, you are meant to be something better than food for powder; and, besides, your Lucretia! Hang it, I am sorry I cannot stay to examine her as I had promised; but I have seen enough to know that she certainly loves you. Ah, when she changed flowers with you, you did

not think I saw you—sly, was not I? Pshaw! she was only playing with Vernon! But still, do you know, Will, now that Sir Miles has spoken to me so, that I could have sobbed—'God bless you, my old boy!'—'pon my life, I could!—now, do you know, that I feel enraged with you for abetting that girl to deceive him."

"I am enraged with myself; and——" Here a servant entered, and informed Mainwaring that he had been searching for him—Sir Miles requested to see him in his room. Mainwaring started like a culprit. "Never fear," whispered Ardworth; "he has no suspicion of you, I'm sure. Shake hands; when shall we meet again? Is it not odd, I, who am a Republican by theory, taking King George's pay to fight against the French? No use stopping now to moralize on such contradictions. John—Tom, what's your name—here, my man, here, throw that portmanteau on your shoulder, and come to the lodge." And so, full of health, hope, vivacity, and spirit, John Walter Ardworth departed on his career.

Meanwhile, Mainwaring slowly took his way to Sir Miles. As he approached the gallery, he met Lucretia, who was coming from her own room. "Sir Miles has sent for me," he said, meaningly. He had time for no more, for the valet was at the door of the gallery, waiting to usher him to his host.

"Ha! you will say not a word that can betray us; guard your looks, too!" whispered Lucretia, hurriedly; "afterwards, join me by the cedars." She passed on towards the staircase, and glanced at the large clock that was placed there. "Past eleven; Vernon is never up before twelve. I must see him before my uncle sends for me, as he will send if he suspects——" She paused, went back to her room, rang for her maid, dressed as for walking, and said, carelessly, "If Sir Miles wants me, I am gone to the rectory, and shall probably return by the village, so that I shall be back about one." Towards the rectory, indeed, Lucretia bent her way; but half way there, turned back, and passing through the plantation at the rear of the house, awaited Mainwaring on the bench beneath the cedars. He was not long before he joined her. His face was sad and thoughtful; and when he seated himself by her side, it was with a weariness of spirit that alarmed her.

"Well, said she, fearfully, and she placed her hand on his.

"Oh, Lucretia," he exclaimed, as he pressed that hand, with an emotion that came from other passions than love, "we, or rather, *I*, have done great wrong. I have been leading you to betray your uncle's trust, to convert your gratitude to him into hypocrisy. I have been unworthy of myself.—I am poor—I am humbly born; but, till I came here, I was rich and proud in honor. I am not so now. Lucretia, pardon me—pardon me! let the dream be over—we must not sin thus; for it is sin, and the worst of sin—treachery. We must part: forget me!"

"Forget you! never, never, never!" cried Lucretia, with suppressed, but most earnest vehemence—her breast heaving, her hands, as he dropped the one he held, clasped together, her eyes, full of tears—transformed at once into softness, meekness, even while racked by passion and despair.

"Oh, William, say anything—reproach, chide, despise me, for mine is all the fault; say anything but that word—'part.' I have chosen you, I have sought you out, I have wooed you if you will; be it so. I cling to you—you are my all—all that saves me from—from *myself*," she added, falteringly, and in a hollow voice. "Your love—you know not what it is to me! I scarcely knew it myself before. I feel what it is now, when you say '*part*.'"

Agitated and tortured, Mainwaring writhed at these burning words, bent his face low, and covered it with his hands.

He felt her clasp struggling to withdraw them, yielded, and saw her kneeling at his feet. His manhood, and his gratitude, and his heart, all moved by that sight in one so haughty, he opened his arms, and she fell on his breast. "You will never say 'part' again, William?" she gasped, convulsively.

"But what are we to do?"

"Say, first, what has passed between you and my uncle."

"Little to relate; for I can repeat words, not tones and looks. Sir Miles spoke to me, at first kindly and encouragingly, about my prospects, said it was time that I should fix myself, added a few words with menacing emphasis against what he called 'idle dreams and desultory ambition,' and observing that I changed

countenance—for I felt that I did—his manner became more cold and severe. Lucretia, if he has not detected our secret, he more than suspects my—my presumption. Finally, he said, drily, that I had better return home, consult with my father, and that if I preferred entering into the service of the government to any mercantile profession, he thought he had sufficient interest to promote my views. But, clearly and distinctly, he left on my mind one impression—that my visits here are over."

"Did he allude to me—to Mr. Vernon?"

"Ah, Lucretia! do you know him so little—his delicacy, his pride?"

Lucretia was silent, and Mainwaring continued:

"I felt that I was dismissed; I took my leave of your uncle; I came hither with the intention to say farewell for ever."

"Hush, hush! that thought is over! And you return to your father's; perhaps better so; it is but hope deferred: and, in your absence, I can the more easily allay all suspicion, if suspicion exists; but I must write to you; we must correspond. William, dear William, write often—write kindly; tell me, in every letter, that you love me—that you love only me—that you will be patient, and confide."

"Dear Lucretia," said Mainwaring, tenderly, and moved by the pathos of her earnest and imploring voice: "but you forget; the bag is always brought first to Sir Miles; he will recognize my hand; and to whom can you trust your own letters?"

"True," replied Lucretia, despondingly; and there was a pause: suddenly she lifted her head, and cried, "but your father's house is not far from this—not ten miles—we can find a spot at the remote end of the park, near the path through the great wood; there I can leave my letters; there I can find yours."

"But it must be seldom. If any of Sir Miles's servants see me, if ——"

"Oh, William, William, this is not the language of love!"

"Forgive me—I think of you!"

"Love thinks of nothing but itself; it is tyrannical, absorbing—it forgets even the object loved; it feeds on danger—it strengthens by obstacles," said Lucretia, tossing her hair from her forehead, and with an expression of dark and wild power on her brow and in her eyes: "fear not for me, I am sufficient guard upon myself; even while I speak, I think; yes, I have thought of the very spot. You remember that hollow oak at the bottom of the dell, in which Guy St. John, the cavalier, is said to have hid himself from Fairfax's soldiers. Every Monday I will leave a letter in that hollow; every Tuesday you can search for it, and leave your own. This is but once a week; there is no risk here."

Mainwaring's conscience still smote him; but he had not the strength to resist the energy of Lucretia. The force of her character seized upon the weak part of his own—its gentleness, its fear of inflicting pain, it reluctance to say "no"—that simple cause of misery to the over timid. A few sentences more, full of courage, confidence, and passion, on the part of the woman, of constraint, and yet of soothed and grateful affection on that of the man, and the affianced parted.

Mainwaring had already given orders to have his trunks sent to him at his father's: and, a hardy pedestrian by habit, he now struck across the park, passed the dell and the hollow tree, commonly called "Guy's Oak," and across woodland and fields golden with ripening corn, took his way to the town, in the centre of which, squre, solid, and imposing, stood the respectable residence of his bustling, active, electioneering father.

Lucretia's eye followed a form, as fair as ever captivated maiden's glance, till it was out of sight; and then, as she emerged from the shade of the cedars into the more open space of the garden, her usual thoughtful composure was restored to her steadfast countenance. On the terrace, she caught sight of Vernon, who had just quitted his own room, where he always breakfasted alone, and who was now languidly stretched on a bench, and basking in the sun. Like all who have abused life, Vernon was not the same man in the early part of the day. The spirits that rose to temperate heat the third hour after noon, and expanded into glow, when the lights shone over gay carousers, at morning were flat and exhausted. With hollow eyes, and that weary fall of the muscles of the cheeks, which betrays the votary of Bacchus, the convivial three-bottle man—Charley Vernon forced a smile, meant to be airy and impertinent, to his pale lips, as he rose with effort, and extended three fingers to his cousin.

"Where have you been hiding? catching bloom from the roses?—you have the prettiest shade of color—just enough—not a hue too much. And there is Sir Miles's valet gone to the rectory, and the fat footman puffing away towards the village, and I, like a faithful warden, from my post at the castle, all looking out for the truant."

"But who wants me, cousin?" said Lucretia, with the full blaze of her rare and captivating smile.

"The knight of Laughton confessedly wants thee, O damsel!—the knight of the Bleeding Heart may want thee more—dare he own it?"

And with a hand that trembled a little, not with love—at least it trembled always a little before the Madeira at luncheon—he lifted hers to his lips.

"Compliments again, words—idle words!" said Lucretia, looking down bashfully.

"How can I convince thee of my sincerity, unless thou takest my life as its pledge, maid of Laughton?"

And very much tired of standing, Charley Vernon drew her gently to the bench, and seated himself by her side. Lucretia's eyes were still downcast, and she remained silent; Vernon, suppressing a yawn, felt that he was bound to continue. There was nothing very formidable in Lucretia's manner.

"Fore Gad!" thought he, "I suppose I must take the heiress after all; the sooner 'tis over, the sooner I can get back to Brook Street."

"It is premature, my fair cousin," said he, aloud—"premature, after less than a week's visit, and only some fourteen or fifteen hours' permitted friendship and intimacy, to say what is uppermost in my thoughts, but we spendthrifts are slow at nothing, not even at wooing. By sweet Venus, then, fair cousin, you look provokingly handsome! Sir Miles, your good uncle, is pleased to forgive all my follies and faults, upon one condition, that you will take on yourself the easy task to reform me. Will you, my fair cousin? Such as I am, you behold me! I am no sinner in the disguise of a saint! My fortune is spent—my health is not strong; but a young widow's is no mournful position. I am gay when I am well; good tempered when ailing. I never betrayed a trust—can you trust me with yourself?"

This was a long speech, and Charley Vernon felt pleased that it was over. There was much in it that would have touched a heart even closed to him, and a little genuine emotion had given light to his eyes and color to his cheek. Amidst all the ravages of dissipation, there was something interesting in his countenance, and manly in his tone and his gesture. But Lucretia was only sensible to one part of his confession—her uncle had consented to his suit. This was all of which she desired to be assured, and against this she now sought to screen herself.

"Your candor, Mr. Vernon," she said, avoiding his eye, "deserves candor in me. I cannot affect to misunderstand you;—but you take me by surprise—I was so unprepared for this. Give me time—I must reflect."

"Reflection is dull work in the country; you can reflect more amusingly in town, my fair cousin."

"I will wait, then, till I find myself in town."

"Ah, you make me the happiest, the most grateful of men," cried Mr. Vernon, rising with a semi-genuflection, which seemed to imply, "Consider yourself knelt to," just as a courteous assailer, with a motion of the hand, implies, "Consider yourself horsewhipped."

Lucretia, who, with all her intellect, had no capacity for humor, recoiled and looked up in positive surprise.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Vernon," she said, with austere gravity.

"Allow me the bliss of flattering myself that you, at least, are understood," replied Charley Vernon, with imperturbable assurance. "You will wait to reflect till you are in town—that is to say, the day after our honeymoon, when you awake in May Fair."

Before Lucretia could reply, she saw the indefatigable valet formally approaching, with the anticipated message that Sir Miles requested to see her. She replied hurriedly to this last, that she would be with her uncle immediately, and when he had again disappeared within the porch, she said, with a constrained effort at frankness—

"Mr. Vernon, if I have misunderstood your words, I think I do not mistake your character. You cannot wish to take advantage of my affection for my uncle, and the passive obedience I owe to him, to force me into a

step—of which—of which—I have not yet sufficiently considered the results. If you really desire that my feelings should be consulted, that I should not—pardon me—consider myself sacrificed to the family pride of my guardian, and the interests of my suitor——"

"Madam!" exclaimed Vernon, reddening.

Pleased with the irritating effect her words had produced—Lucretia continued calmly—"If, in a word, I am to be a free agent in a choice on which my happiness depends, forbear to urge Sir Miles further at present—forbear to press your suit upon me. Give me the delay of a few months; I shall know how to appreciate your delicacy."

"Miss Clavering," answered Vernon, with a touch of the St. John haughtiness, "I am in despair that you should even think so grave an appeal to my honor necessary. I am well aware of your expectations and my poverty. And believe me, I would rather rot in a prison than enrich myself by forcing your inclinations. You have but to say the word, and I will (as becomes me as man and gentleman) screen you from all chance of Sir Miles's displeasure, by taking it on myself to decline an honor of which I feel, indeed, very undeserving."

"But I have offended you," said Lucretia, softly, while she turned aside to conceal the glad light of her eyes,—"pardon me; and, to prove that you do so, give me your arm to my uncle's room."

Vernon, with rather more of Sir Miles's antiquated stiffness, than his own rakish ease, offered his arm, with a profound reverence, to his cousin; and they took their way to the house. Not till they had passed up the stairs, and were even in the gallery, did further words pass between them. Then Vernon said, "But what is your wish, Miss Clavering? On what footing shall I remain here?"

"Will you suffer me to dictate?" replied Lucretia, stopping short with well feigned confusion, as if suddenly aware that the right to dictate gives the right to hope.

"Ah, consider me at least as your slave!" whispered Vernon, as his eye, resting on the contour of that matchless neck, partially and advantageously turned from him, he began with his constitutional admiration of the sex, to feel interested in a pursuit, that now seemed, after piquing, to flatter, his self-love.

"Then I will use the privilege when we meet again," answered Lucretia; and drawing her arm gently from his, she passed on to her uncle, leaving Vernon midway in the gallery.

Those faded portraits looked down on her with that melancholy gloom, which the effigies of our dead ancestors seem mysteriously to acquire. To noble and aspiring spirits, no homily to truth, and honor, and fair ambition is more eloquent, than the mute and melancholy canvas, from which our fathers, made, by death, our household gods, contemplate us still. They appear to confide to us the charge of their unblemished names. They speak to us from the grave, and, heard aright, the pride of family is the guardian angel of its heirs. But Lucretia, with her hard and scholastic mind, despised as the veriest weakness all the poetry that belongs to the sense of a pure descent. It was because she was proud as the proudest in herself, that she had nothing but contempt for the virtue, the valor, or the wisdom of those that had gone before. So with a brain busy with guile and stratagem, she trod on beneath the eyes of the simple and spotless Dead.

Vernon, thus left alone, mused a few moments on what had passed between himself and the heiress, and then slowly retracing his steps, his eye roved along the stately series of his line. "Faith!" he muttered, "if my boyhood had been passed in this old gallery, his Royal Highness would have lost a good fellow and hard drinker; and his Majesty would have had, perhaps, a more distinguished soldier—certainly, a worthier subject. If I marry this lady, and we are blessed with a son, he shall walk through this gallery, once a day, before he is flogged into Latin!"

Lucretia's interview with her uncle was a masterpiece of art. What pity that such craft and subtlety were wasted in our little day, and on such petty objects; under the Medici, that spirit had gone far to the shaping of history Sure, from her uncle's openness, that he would plunge at once into the subject for which she deemed she was summoned, she evinced no repugnance, when, tenderly kissing her, he asked, "If Charles Vernon had a chance of winning favor in her eyes?" She knew that she was safe in saying "No:" that her uncle would never force her inclinations: Safe so far as Vernon was concerned; but she desired

more; she desired thoroughly to quench all suspicion that her heart was pre-occupied; entirely to remove from Sir Miles's thoughts the image of Mainwaring; and a denial of one suitor might quicken the baronet's eyes to the concealment of the other.

Nor, was this all: if Sir Miles was seriously bent upon seeing her settled in marriage before his death, the dismissal of Vernon might only expose her to the importunity of new candidates, more difficult to deal with. Vernon himself she could use as the shield against the arrows of a host. Therefore, when Sir Miles repeated his question, she answered with much gentleness and seeming modest sense, that "Mr. Vernon had much that must prepossess in his favor; that in addition to his own advantages he had one, the highest in her eyes, her uncle's sanction and approval. But," and she hesitated with becoming and natural diffidence, "were not his habits unfixed and roving? So it was said; she knew not herself —she would trust her happiness to her uncle. But if so, and if Mr. Vernon were really disposed to change, would it not be prudent to try him—try him where there was temptation; not in the repose of Laughton, but amidst his own haunts of London? Sir Miles had friends who would honestly inform him of the result. She did but suggest this: she was too ready to leave all to her dear guardian's acuteness and experience."

Melted by her docility, and in high approval of the prudence which betokened a more rational judgment than he himself had evinced, the good old man clasped her to his breast, and shed tears as he praised and thanked her—she had decided as she always did, for the best.—Heaven forbid that she should be wasted on an incorrigible man of pleasure! "And," said the frank-hearted gentleman, unable long to keep any thought concealed, "And to think that I could have wronged you, for a moment, my own noble child!—that I could have been dolt enough to suppose that the good looks of that boy Mainwaring might have caused you to forget what —but you change color!"—for with all her dissimulation, Lucretia loved too ardently not to shrink at that name thus suddenly pronounced. "Oh," continued the baronet, drawing her towards him still more closely, while with one hand he put back her face that he might read its expression the more closely —"oh, if it had been so—if it be so, I will pity, not blame you, for my neglect was the fault; pity you, for I have known a similar struggle; admire you in pity, for you have the spirit of your ancestors, and you will conquer the weakness. Speak! have I touched on the truth? Speak without fear, child!—you have no mother; but in age a man sometimes gets a mother's heart."

Startled and alarmed as the lark when the step nears its nest, Lucretia summoned all the dark wile of her nature to mislead the intruder. "No, uncle, no; I am not so unworthy. You misconceived my emotion."

"Ah, you know that he has had the presuption to love you—the puppy! and you feel the compassion you women always feel for such offenders! Is that it?"

Rapidly Lucretia considered if it would be wise to leave that impression on his mind; on one hand, it might account for a moment's agitation, and if Mainwaring were detected hovering near the domain, in the exchange of their correspondence, it might appear but the idle, if hopeless, romance of youth, which haunts the mere home of its object—but, no; on the other hand, it left his banishment absolute and confirmed. Her resolution was taken with a promptitude that made her pause not perceptible.

"No, my dear uncle," she said, so cheerfully, that it removed all doubt from the mind of her listener, "but Monsieur Dalibard has rallied me on the subject, and I was so angry with him, that when you touched on it I thought more of my quarrel with him than of poor timid Mr. Mainwaring himself. Come now, own it, dear sir! Monsieur Dalibard has instilled this strange fancy into your head."

"No, 'Slife: if he had taken such a liberty, I should have lost my librarian. No, I assure you, it was rather Vernon: you know true love is jealous."

"Vernon!" thought Lucretia; "he must go, and at once." Sliding from her uncle's arms to the stool at his feet, she then led the conversation more familiarly back into the channel it had lost, and when at last he escaped, it was with the understanding that, without promise or compromise, Mr. Vernon should return to London at once, and be put upon the ordeal, through which she felt as-

sured it was little likely he should pass with success.

CHAPTER IV.

Guy's Oak.

THREE weeks afterwards, the life at Laughton seemed restored to the cheerful and somewhat monotonous tranquillity of its course, before chafed and disturbed by the recent interruptions to the stream. Vernon had departed satisfied with the justice of the trial imposed on him, and far too high-spirited to seek to extort from niece or uncle any engagement beyond that which, to a nice sense of honor, the trial itself imposed. His memory and his heart were still faithful to Mary; but his senses, his fancy, his vanity, were a little involved in his success with the heiress. Though so free from all mercenary meanness, Mr. Vernon was still enough man of the world to be sensible of the advantages of the alliance which had first been pressed on him by Sir Miles; and from which Lucretia herself appeared not to be averse.

The season of London was over, but there was always a set, and that set the one in which Charley Vernon principally moved, who found town fuller than the country. Besides, he went occasionally to Brighton, which was then to England what Baiæ was to Rome. The Prince was holding gay court at the Pavillion, and that was the atmosphere which Vernon was habituated to breathe. He was no parasite of royalty: he had that strong personal affection to the Prince which it is often the good fortune of royalty to attract. Nothing is less founded than the complaint which poets put into the lips of princes, that they have no friends; it is, at least, their own perverse fault if that be the case—a little amiability, a little of frank kindness goes so far when it emanates from the rays of a crown! But Vernon was stronger than Lucretia deemed him,—once contemplating the prospect of a union which was to consign to his charge the happiness of another, and feeling all that he should owe in such a marriage to the confidence both of niece and uncle, he evinced steadier principles than he had ever made manifest, when he had only his own fortune to mar, and his own happiness to trifle with. He joined his old companions; but he kept aloof from their more dissipated pursuits. Beyond what was then thought the venial error of too devout libations to Bacchus, Charley Vernon seemed reformed.

Ardworth had joined a regiment which had departed for the field of action. Mainwaring was still with his father, and had not yet announced to Sir Miles any wish or project for the future.

Olivier Dalibard, as before, passed his mornings alone in his chamber—his noon and his evenings with Sir Miles. He avoided all private conference with Lucretia. She did not provoke them. Young Gabriel amused himself in copying Sir Miles's pictures, sketching from Nature, scribbling in his room, prose or verse, no matter which (he never showed his lucubrations), pinching the dogs when he could catch them alone, shooting the cats, if they appeared in the plantation, on pretence of love for the young pheasants, sauntering into the cottages, where he was a favorite, because of his good looks, but where he always contrived to leave the trace of his visits in disorder and mischief, upsetting the tea-kettle and scalding the children, or, what he loved dearly, setting two gossips by the ears.

But these occupations were over by the hour Lucretia left her apartment. From that time he never left her out of view; and, when encouraged to join her at his usual privileged times, whether in the gardens at sunset, or in her evening niche in the drawing-room, he was sleek, silken, and caressing as Cupid, after plaguing the Nymphs, at the feet of Psyche. These two strange persons had indeed apparently that sort of sentimental familiarity which is sometimes seen between a fair boy and a girl much older than himself; but the attaction that drew them together was an indefinable instinct of their similarity in many traits of their several characters,—the whelp leopard sported fearlessly round the she-panther. Before Olivier's midnight conference with his son, Gabriel had drawn close and closer to Lucretia, as an ally against his father; for that father he cherished feelings which, beneath the most docile obedience, concealed horror and hate, and something of the ferocity of revenge. And if young Varney loved any one on earth except himself it was Lucretia Clavering. She had administered to his ruling passions,

which were for effect and display; she had devised the dress which set off to the utmost his exterior, and gave it that picruresque and artistic appearance which he had sighed for in his study of the portraits of Titian and Vandyke. She supplied him (for in money she was generous) with enough to gratify and forestall every boyish caprice, and this liberality now turned against her, for it had increased into a settled vice, his natural taste for extravagance, and made all other considerations subordinate to that of feeding his cupidity. She praised his drawings, which, though self-taught, were indeed extraordinary, predicted his fame as an artist, lifted him into consequence amongst the guests by her notice and eulogies; and what, perhaps, won him more than all, he felt that it was to her—to Dalibard's desire to conceal before her his more cruel propensities—that he owed his father's change from the most refined severity to the most paternal gentleness.

And thus he had repaid her, as she expected, by a devotion which she trusted to employ against her tutor himself, should the baffled aspirant become the scheming rival and the secret foe. But now, thoroughly aware of the gravity of his father's objects, seeing before him the chance of a settled establishment at Laughton, a positive and influential connection with Lucretia; and on the other hand, a return to the poverty he recalled with disgust, and the terrors of his father's solitary malice and revenge, he entered fully into Dalibard's sombre plans, and, without scruple or remorse, would have abetted any harm to his benefactress. Thus craft doomed to have accomplices in craft, resembles the spider whose web, spread indeed for the fly, attracts the fellow spider that shall thrust it forth, and profit by the meshes it has woven for a victim, to surrender to a master.

Already young Varney, set quietly and ceaselessly to spy every movement of Lucretia's, had reported to his father two visits to the most retired part of the park; but he had not yet ventured near enough to discover the exact spot, and his very watch on Lucretia had prevented the detection of Mainwaring himself in his stealthy exchange of correspondence. Dalibard bade him continue his watch, without hinting at his ulterior intentions, for indeed, in these he was not decided. Even should he discover any communication between Lucretia and Mainwaring, how reveal it to Sir Miles without for ever precluding himself from the chance of profiting by the betrayal? Could Lucretia ever forgive the injury, and could she fail to detect the hand that inflicted it? His only hope was in the removal of Mainwaring from his path by other agencies than his own, and (by an appearance of generosity and self-abandonment; in keeping her secret, and submitting to his fate) he trusted to regain the confidence she now withheld from him, and use it to his advantage when the time came to defend himself from Vernon. For he had learned from Sir Miles the passive understanding with respect to that candidate for her hand; and he felt assured that had Mainwaring never existed, could he cease to exist for her hopes, Lucretia, despite her dissimulation, would succumb to one she feared but respected, rather than to one she evidently trifled with and despised.

"But the course to be taken must be adopted after the evidence is collected," thought the subtle schemer, and he tranquilly continued his chess with the baronet.

Before, however, Gabriel could make any further discoveries, an event occurred which excited very different emotions amongst those it more immediately interested.

Sir Miles had, during the last twelvemonths, been visited by two seizures, seemingly of an apopletic character. Whether they were apoplexy or the less alarming attacks that arise from some more gentle congestion, occasioned by free living and indolent habits, was matter of doubt with his physician—not a very skilful, though a very formal man. Country doctors were not then the same able educated, and scientific class that they are now rapidly becoming. Sir Miles himself so stoutly and so eagerly repudiated the least hint of the more unfavorable interpretation, that the doctor, if not convinced by his patient, was awed from expressing plainly a contrary opinion. There are certain persons who will dismiss their physician if he tells them the truth: Sir Miles was one of them.

In his character there was a weakness not uncommon to the proud. He did not fear death, but he shrank from the thought that others should calcaulate on his dying. He was fond of his power, though he exercised it

gently: he knew that the power of wealth and station is enfeebled in proportion as its dependents can foresee the date of its transfer. He dreaded, too, the comments which are always made on those visited by his peculiar disease: "Poor Sir Miles! an apopletic fit! his intellect must be very much shaken—he revoked at whist last night—memory sadly impaired!" This may be a pitiable foible; but heroes and statesmen have had it most: pardon it in the proud old man. He enjoined the physician to state throughout the house and the neighborhood, that the attacks were wholly innocent and unimportant. The physician did so, and was generally believed; for Sir Miles seemed as lively and as vigorous after them as before. Two persons alone were not deceived—Dalibard and Lucretia. The first, at an earlier part of his life, had studied pathology with the profound research and ingenious application, which he brought to bear upon all he undertook. He whispered from the first to Lucretia—

"Unless your uncle changes his habits, takes exercise, and forbears wine and the table, his days are numbered."

And when this intelligence was first conveyed to her, before she had become acquainted with Mainwaring, Lucretia felt the shock of a grief sudden and sincere. We have seen how these better sentiments changed as a human life became an obstacle in her way. In her character, what phrenologists call 'destructiveness,' in the comprehensive sense of the word, was superlatively developed. She had not actual cruelty; she was not bloodthirsty: those vices belong to a different cast of character. She was rather deliberately and intellectually unsparing—a goal was before her; she must march to it; all in the way were but hostile impediments. At first, however, Sir Miles was not in the way, except to fortune, and for that, as avarice was not her leading vice, she could well wait; therefore, at this hint of the Provençal's, she ventured to urge her uncle to abstinence and exercise, but Sir Miles was touchy on the subject; he feared the interpretations which great change of habits might suggest, the memory of the fearful warning died away, and he felt as well as before, for, save an old rheumatic gout (which had long since left him, with no other apparent evil but a lameness in the joints, that rendered exercise unwelcome and painful), he possessed one of those comfortable, and often treacherous constitutions, which evince no displeasure at irregalarities, and bear all liberties with philosophical composure.

Accordingly, he would have his own way; and he contrived to coax or to force his doctor into an authority on his side: wine was necessary to his constitution; much exercise was a dangerous fatigue. The second attack, following four moths after the first, was less alarming, and Sir Miles fancied it concealed even from his niece; but three nights after his recovery, the old baronet sat musing alone for some time in his own room, before he retired to rest. Then he rose, opened his desk, and read his will attentively, locked it up with a slight sigh, and took down his Bible. The next morning he despatched the letters which summoned Ardworth and Vernon to his house; and, as he quitted his room, his look lingered with melancholy fondness upon the portraits in the gallery. No one was by the old man to interpret these slight signs, in which lay a world of meaning.

A few weeks after Vernon had left the house, and in the midst of the restored tranquillity we have described, it so happened that Sir Miles's physician, after dining at the hall, had been summoned to attend one of the children at the neighboring rectory, and there he spent the night. A little before daybreak his slumbers was disturbed; he was recalled in all haste to Laughton Hall. For the third time, he found Sir Miles speechless. Dalibard was by his bedside, Lucretia had not been made aware of the seizure; for Sir Miles had previously told his valet (who of late slept in the same room) never to alarm Miss Clavering if he was taken ill. The doctor was about to apply his usual remedies; but when he drew forth his lancet, Dalibard placed his hand on the physician's arm—

"Not *this* time," he said slowly, and with emphasis; "it will be his death."

"Pooh, sir!" said the doctor, disdainfully.

"Do so, then! bleed him, and take the responsibility. I have studied medicine—I know these symptoms. In this case the apoplexy may spare—the lancet kills."

The physician drew back dismayed and doubtful.

"What would you do, then?"

"Wait three minutes longer the effect of the cataplasms I have applied. If they fail——"

"Ay, then?"

"A chill bath, and vigorous friction."

"Sir, I will never permit it."

"Then murder your patient your own way."

All this while Sir Miles lay senseless, his eyes wide open, his teeth locked. The doctor drew near, looked at the lancet, and said irresolutely—

"Your practice is new to me; but if you have studied medicine, that's another matter. Will you guarantee the success of your plan?"

"Yes."

"Mind, I wash my hands of it; I take Mr. Jones to witness:" and he appealed to the valet.

"Call up the footmen, and lift your master," said Dalibard; and the doctor, glancing round, saw that a bath, filled some seven or eight inches deep with water, stood already prepared in the room. Perplexed and irresolute he offered no obstacle to Dalibard's movements. The body, seeming lifeless, was placed in the bath; and the servant's under Dalibard's directions, applied vigorous and incessant friction. Several minutes elapsed before any favorable sympton took place; at length, Sir Miles heaved a deep sigh, and the eyes moved—a minute or two more, and the teeth chattered; the blood, set in motion, appeared on the surface of the skin: life ebbed back; the danger was past; the dark foe driven from the citadel. Sir Miles spoke audibly, though incoherently, as he was taken back to his bed, warmly covered up, the lights removed, noise forbidden, and Dalibard and the doctor remained in silence by the bedside.

"Rich man," thought Dalibard, "thine hour is not yet come; thy wealth must not pass to the boy Mainwaring."

Sir Miles's recovery, under the care of Dalibard, who now had his own way, was as rapid and complete as before. Lucretia, when she heard, the next morning, of the attack, felt, we dare not say, a guilty joy, but a terrible and feverish agitation. Sir Miles himself, informed by his valet, of Dalibard's wrestle with the doctor, felt a profound gratitude, and reverent wonder for the simple means to which he probably owed his restoration; and he listened with a docility which Dalibard was not prepared to expect, to his learned secretary's urgent admonitions as to the life he must lead, if he desired to live at all. Convinced, at last, that wine and good cheer had not blockaded out the enemy, and having to do, in Olivier Dalibard, with a very different temper from the doctor's, he assented with a tolerable grace to the trial of a strict regimen and to daily exercise in the open air. Dalibard now became constantly with him—the increase of his influence was as natural as it was apparent. Lucretia trembled; she divined a danger in his power, now separate from her own, and which threatened to be independent of it. She became abstracted and uneasy—jealousy of the Provençal possessed her. She began to meditate schemes for his downfall. At this time, Sir Miles received the following letter from Mr. Fielden:—

"SOUTHAMPTON, *August 20th*, 1801.

"DEAR SIR MILES,—You will remember that I informed you when I arrived at Southampton, with my dear young charge; and Susan has twice written to her sister, implying the request which she lacked the courage, seeing that she is timid, expressly to urge, that Miss Clavering might again be permitted to visit her. Miss Clavering has answered, as might be expected from the propinquity of the relationship; but she has perhaps the same fears of offending you that actuate her sister. But now, since the worthy clergyman, who had undertaken my parochial duties, has found the air insalubrious, and prays me not to enforce the engagement by which we had exchanged our several charges for the space of a calendar year, I am reluctantly compelled to return home—my dear wife, thank Heaven, being already restored to health, which is an unspeakable mercy; and I am sure I cannot be sufficiently grateful to Providence, which has not only provided me with a liberal independence of more than two hundred pounds a-year, but the best of wives and the most dutiful of children—possessions that I venture to call 'the riches of the heart.' Now, I pray you, my dear Sir Miles, to gratify these two deserving young persons, and to suffer Miss Lucretia incontinently to visit her sister. Counting on your consent, thus boldly demanded, I have already prepared an apartment for Miss Clavering; and Susan is busy in what, though I do not know much of such feminine matters, the whole house declares to be a most beautiful and fanciful toilet cover, with roses and forget-me-nots cut out of muslin, and two large silk tassels, which cost her three shillings and fourpence. I cannot conclude, without thanking you from my heart for your noble kindness to young Ardworth. He is so full of ardor and spirit, that I remember, poor lad, when I left him, as I thought, hard at work on that well-known problem of Euclid, vulgarly called the Asses' Bridge—I found him describing a figure 8 on the village pond, which was only just frozen over! Poor lad! Heaven will take care of him, I know, as it does of all who take no care of them-

selves. Ah, Sir Miles, if you could but see Susan—such a nurse, too, in illness!

"I have the honor to be,
"Sir Miles,
"Your most humble, poor servant, to command,
MATHEW FIELDEN."

Sir Miles put this letter in his niece's hand, and said, kindly, "Why not have gone to see your sister before?—I should not have been angry. Go, my child, as soon as you like: to-morrow is Sunday—no travelling that day—but the next, the carriage shall be at your order."

Lucretia hesitated a moment. To leave Dalibard in sole possession of the field, even for a few days, was a thought of alarm; but what evil could he do in that time? And her pulse beat quickly!—Mainwaring could come to Southampton!—she should see him again, after more than six weeks' absence! She had so much to relate and to hear—she fancied his last letter had been colder and shorter—she yearned to hear him say with his own lips, that "he loved her still!" This idea banished or prevailed over all others. She thanked her uncle cheerfully and gaily, and the journey was settled.

"Be at watch early on Monday," said Olivier to his son.

Monday came—the baronet had ordered the carriage to be at the door at ten. A little before eight, Lucretia stole out, and took her way to Guy's Oak. Gabriel had placed himself in readiness; he had climbed a tree at the bottom of the park (near the place where hitherto he had lost sight of her); she passed under it,—on through a dark grove of pollard oaks. When she was at a sufficient distance, the boy dropped from his perch; with the stealth of an Indian, he crept on her trace, following from tree to tree, always sheltered, always watchful; he saw her pause at the dell, and look round—she descended into the hollow; he slunk through the fern—he gained the marge of the dell, and looked down—she was lost to his sight. At length, to his surprise, he saw the gleam of her robe emerge from the hollow of a tree—her head stooped as she came through the aperture; he had time to shrink back amongst the fern; she passed on hurriedly, the same way she had taken, back to the house; then into the dell crept the boy. Guy's Oak, vast and venerable, with gnarled green boughs below, and sere branches above, that told that its day of fall was decreed at last—rose high from the abyss of the hollow—high and far-seen amidst the trees that stood on the vantage-ground above—even as a great name soars the loftier when it springs from the grave.

A dark and irregular fissure gave entrance to the heart of the oak—the boy glided in and looked round—he saw nothing—yet something there must be. The rays of the early sun did not penetrate into the hollow, it was as dim as a cave. He felt slowly in every crevice, and a startled moth or two flew out. It was not for moths that the girl had come to Guy's Oak! He drew back, at last, in despair; as he did so, he heard a low sound close at hand, a low murmuring, angry sound, like a hiss; he looked round, and through the dark, two burning eyes fixed his own—he had startled a snake from its bed. He drew out in time, as the reptile sprang; but now, his task, search, and object were forgotten. With the versality of a child, his thoughts were all on the enemy he had provoked. That zest of prey which is inherent in man's breast, which makes him love the sport and the chase, and maddens boyhood and age with the passion for slaughter, leapt up within him; anything of danger, and contest, and excitement, gave Gabriel Varney a strange fever of pleasure.

He sprang up the sides of the dell, climbed the park pales on which it bordered, was in the wood where the young shoots rose green and strong from the underwood;—to cut a staff for the strife, to descend again into the dell, creep again through the fissure, look round for those vengeful eyes, was quick done as the joyous play of the impulse. The poor snake had slid down in content and fancied security; its young, perhaps, were not far off; its wrath had been the instinct Nature gives to the mother. It hath done thee no harm yet, boy; leave it in peace! The young hunter had no ear to such whisper of prudence or mercy. Dim and blind in the fissure he struck the ground and the tree with his stick, shouted out, bade the eyes gleam, and defied them; whether or not the reptile had spent its ire in the first fruitless spring, and this unlooked for return of the intruder rather daunted than exasperated, we leave those better versed in natural history to conjecture; but instead of

obeying the challenge and courting the contest, it glided by the sides of the oak, close to the very feet of its foe, and, emerging into the light, dragged its grey coils through the grass; but its hiss still betrayed it. Gabriel sprang through the fissure, and struck at the craven, insulting it with a laugh of scorn as he struck. Suddenly it halted, suddenly reared its crest; the throat swelled with venom, the tongue darted out, and again, green as emeralds, glared the spite of its eyes. No fear felt Gabriel Varney; his arm was averted; he gazed spelled and admiringly with the eye of an artist. Had he had pencil and tablet at that moment, he would have dropped his weapon for the sketch, though the snake had been as deadily as the viper of Sumatra. The sight sunk into his memory, to be reproduced often by the wild, morbid fancies of his hand. Scarce a moment, however, had he for the gaze; the reptile sprang, and fell, baffled and bruised by the involuntary blow of its enemy. As it writhed on the grass, how its colors came out—how graceful were the movements of its pain! And still the boy gazed, till the eye was sated, and the cruelty returned. A blow— a second—a third—all the beauty is gone—shapeless, and clotted with glore, that elegant head; mangled and dissevered the airy spires of that delicate shape, which had glanced in its circling involutions, free and winding as a poet's thought through his verse. The boy trampled the quivering relics into the sod, with a fierce animal joy of conquest, and turned once more towards the hollow, for a last almost hopeless survey. Lo, his object was found! In his search for the snake, eitheir his staff, or his foot, had disturbed a layer of moss in the corner; the faint ray, ere he entered the hollow, gleamed upon something white. He emerged from the cavity with a letter in his hand: he read the address, thrust it into his bosom, and as stealthily, but more rapidly, than he had come, took his way to his father.

CHAPTER V.

Household Treason.

THE Provençal took the letter from his son's hand, and looked at him with an approbation half-complacent, half-ironical. "*Mon fils!* said he, patting the boy's head gently; "why should we not be friends? We want each other; we have the strong world to fight against."

"Not if you are master of this place."

"Well answered: no; then we shall have the strong world on our side, and shall have only rogues and the poor to make war upon.' Then, with a quiet gesture, he dismissed his son, and gazed slowly on the letter. His pulse, which was usually low, quickened, and his lips were tightly compressed; he shrank from the contents with a jealous pang; as a light quivers strugglingly in a noxious vault, love, descended into that hideous breast, gleamed upon dreary horrors, and warred with the noxious atmosphere; but it shone still. To this dangerous man, every art that gives power to the household traitor was familiar; he had no fear that the violated seal should betray the fraud which gave the contents to the eye that, at length, steadily fell upon the following lines:

"Dearest, and ever dearest,—

"Where art thou at this moment? what are thy thoughts? are they upon me? I write this at the dead of night. I picture you to myself as my hand glides over the paper. I think I see you, as you look on these words, and envy them the gaze of those dark eyes. Press your lips to the paper. Do you feel the kiss that I leave there? Well, well! it will not be for long now that we shall be divided. Oh, what joy, when I think that I am about to see you. Two days more, at most three, and we shall meet—shall we not? I am going to see my sister. I subjoin my address. Come, come, come; I thirst to see you once more. And I did well to say, 'Wait, and be patient;' we shall not wait long: before the year is out, I shall be free. My uncle has had another and more deadly attack. I see its trace in his face, in his step, in his whole form and bearing. The only obstacle between us is fading away. Can I grieve when I think it?—grieve when life with you spreads smiling beyond the old man's grave? And why should age, that has survived all passion, stand with its chilling frown, and the miserable prejudices the world has not conquered, but strengthened into a creed—why should age stand between youth and youth? I feel your mild eyes rebuke me as I write. But chide me not that on earth I see only you: And it will be mine to give you wealth and rank!—mine to see the homage of my own heart reflected from the crowd who bow not to the statue, but the pedestal. Oh, how I shall enjoy your revenge upon the proud!—for I have drawn no pastoral scenes in my picture of the future. No; I see you leading senates, and duping fools. I shall be by your side, your partner, step after step, as you mount the height, for I am ambitious, you know, William; and not less, because I love: Rather ten thousand times more so. I would not have you born great and noble, for what

then could we look to? what use all my schemes, and my plans, and aspirings? Fortune, accident would have taken from us the great zest of life, which is desire.

"When I see you, I shall tell you that I have some fears of Olivier Dalibard: he has evidently some wily project in view. He, who never interfered before with the blundering physician, now thrusts him aside, affects to have saved the old man, attends him always. Dares he think to win an influence, to turn against me?—against us? Happily, when I shall come back, my uncle will probably be restored to the false strength which deceives him, he will have less need of Dalibard, and then—then let the Frenchman beware! I have already a plot to turn his schemes to his own banishment. Come to Southampton, then, as soon as you can—perhaps the day you receive this—on Wednesday, at farthest. Your last letter implies blame of my policy with respect to Vernon. Again I say, it is necessary to amuse my uncle to the last. Before Vernon can advance a claim, there will be weeping at Laughton. I shall weep, too, perhaps; but there will be joy in those tears, as well as sorrow: for then, when I clasp thy hand, I can murmur, 'It is mine at last, and for ever!'

"Adieu! no, not adieu—to our meeting, my lover, my beloved!—thy LUCRETIA!"

An hour after Miss Clavering had departed on her visit, Dalibard returned the letter to his son, the seal seemingly unbroken, and bade him replace it in the hollow of the tree, but sufficiently in sight, to betray itself to the first that entered. He then communicated the plan he had formed for its detection—a plan which would prevent Lucretia ever suspecting the agency of his son or himself; and this done, he joined Sir Miles in the gallery. Hitherto, in addition to his other apprehensions in revealing to the baronet Lucretia's clandestine intimacy with Mainwaring, Dalibard had shrunk from the thought, that the disclosure would lose her the heritage which had first tempted his avarice or ambition; but now his jealous and his vindictive passions were aroused, and his whole plan of strategy was changed. He must crush Lucretia, or she would crush him, as her threats declared. To ruin her in Sir Miles's eyes, to expel her from his house, might not, after all, weaken his own position, even with regard to power over herself. If he remained firmly established at Laughton, he could affect intercession, he could delay at least any precipitate union with Mainwaring, by practising on the ambition which he still saw at work beneath her love; he might become a necessary ally, and then, — why then — his ironical smile glanced across his lips. But beyond this his quick eye saw fair prospects to self-interest—Lucretia banished; the heritage not hers; the will to be altered; Dalibard esteemed indispensable to the life of the baronet! Come, there was hope here, not for the heritage, indeed, but at least for a munificent bequest.

At noon, some visitors, bringing strangers from London, whom Sir Miles had invited to see the house, (which was one of the lions of the neighborhood, though not professedly a show place), were expected. Aware of this, Dalibard prayed the baronet to rest quiet till his company arrived, and then he said carelessly—

"It will be a healthful diversion to your spirits to accompany them a little in the park—you can go in your garden chair—you will have new companions to talk with by the way; and it is always warm and sunny at the slope of the hill, towards the bottom of the park."

Sir Miles assented cheerfully: the guests came; strolled over the house, admired the pictures and the armor, and the hall and the staircase: paid due respect to the substantial old-fashioned luncheon; and then, refreshed, and in great good humor, acquiesced in Sir Miles's proposition to saunter through the park.

The poor baronet was more lively than usual. The younger people clustered gaily round his chair (which was wheeled by his valet), smiling at his jests, and charmed with his courteous high breeding. A little in the rear, walked Gabriel, paying special attention to the prettiest and merriest girl of the company, who was a great favorite with Sir Miles, perhaps for those reasons.

"What a delightful old gentleman!" said the young lady. "How I envy Miss Clavering such an uncle!"

"Ah! but you are a little out of favor today, I can tell you," said Gabriel, laughingly; "you were close by Sir Miles when he went through the picture-gallery, and you never asked him the history of the old knight in the bluff doublet and blue sash."

"Dear me, what of that?"

"Why, that was brave Colonel Guy St. John, the cavalier; the pride and boast of Sir Miles: you know his weakness. He looked so displeased when you said, 'what a droll looking figure!' I was on thorns for you!"

"What a pity! I would not offend dear Sir Miles for the world."

"Well, it's easy to make up with him. Go, and tell him that he must take you to see Guy's Oak, in the dell, that you have heard so much about it; and when you get him on his hobby, it is hard if you can't make your peace."

"Oh! I'll certainly do it, Master Varney;" and the young lady lost no time in obeying the hint. Gabriel had set other tongues on the same cry, so that there was a general exclamation, when the girl named the subject—"Oh, Guy's Oak, by all means!"

Much pleased with the enthusiasim this memorial of his pet ancestor produced, Sir Miles led the way to the dell, and, pausing as he reached the verge, said—

"I fear I cannot do you the honors: it is too steep for my chair to descend safely."

Gabriel whispered the fair companion whose side he still kept to.

"Now, my dear Sir Miles," cried the girl, "I positively won't stir without you; I am sure we could get down the chair without a jolt. Look there, how nicely the ground slopes! Jane, Lucy, my dears, let us take charge of Sir Miles. Now, then."

The gallant old gentleman would have marched to the breach in such guidance: he kissed the fair hands that lay so temptingly on his chair, and then rising with some difficulty, said—

"No, my dears, you have made me so young again, that I think I can walk down the steep with the best of you."

So, leaning partly on his valet, and by the help of the hands extended to him, step after step, Sir Miles, with well-disguised effort, reached the huge roots of the oak.

"The hollow then was much smaller," said he, "so he was not so easily detected as a man would be now: the damned crop-ears—I beg pardon, my dears—the rascally rebels, poked their swords through the fissure, and two went, one through his jerkin, one through his arm; but he took care not to swear at the liberty, and they went away, not suspecting him."

While thus speaking, the young people were already playfully struggling which should first enter the oak. Two got precedence, and went in and out, one after the other. Gabriel breathed hard—"The blind owlets!" thought he, "and I put the letter where a mole would have seen it!"

"You know the spell when you enter an oak tree where the fairies have been," he whispered to the fair object of his notice. "You must turn round three times, look carefully on the ground, and you will see the face you love best. If I was but a little older, how I should pray!——"

"Nonsense!" said the girl, blushing, as she now slid through the crowd, and went timidly in; presently she uttered a little exclamation.

The gallant Sir Miles stooped down to see what was the matter, and offering his hand as she came out, was startled to see her holding a letter.

"Only think what I have found?" said the girl. "What a strange place for a post-office! Bless me! it is directed to Mr. Mainwaring!"

"Mr. Mainwaring!" cried three or four voices; but the baronet's was mute. His eye recognized Lucretia's hand; his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; the blood surged, like a sea, in his temples; his face became purple. Suddenly Gabriel, peeping over the girl's shoulder, snatched away the letter.

"It is my letter—it is mine! What a shame in Mainwaring not to have come for it as he promised!"

Sir Miles looked round, and breathed more freely.

"Yours, Master Varney!" said the young lady, astonished. "What can make your letters to Mr. Mainwaring such a secret?"

"Oh! you'll laugh at me; but——but—— I wrote a poem on Guy's Oak, and Mr. Mainwaring promised to get it into the County Paper for me; and as he was to pass close by the park pales, through the wood yonder, on his way to D—— last Saturday, we agreed that I should leave it here; but he has forgotten his promise, I see."

Sir Miles grasped the boy's arm with a convulsive pressure of gratitude. There was a general cry for Gabriel to read his poem on the spot; but the boy looked sheepish, and hung down his head, and seemed rather more disposed to cry than to recite. Sir Miles, with an effort at simulation that all his long practice of the world never could have nerved him to, unexcited by a motive less strong than the honor of his blood and house, came to the relief of the young wit that had just come to his own.

"Nay," he said, almost calmly, "I know our young poet is too shy to oblige you. I will take charge of your verses, Master Gabriel;" and, with a grave air of command, he took the letter from the boy, and placed it in his pocket.

The return to the house was less gay than the visit to the oak. The baronet himself made a feverish effort to appear blithe and *debonnair* as before; but it was not successful. Fortunately, the carriages were all at the door as they the reached house, and, luncheon being over, nothing delayed the parting compliments of the guests. As the last carriage drove away, Sir Miles beckoned to Gabriel and bade him follow him into his room.

When there, he dismissed his valet, and said—

"You know, then, who wrote this letter. Have you been in the secret of the correspondence? Speak the truth, my dear boy, it shall cost you nothing."

"Oh, Sir Miles!" cried Gabriel, earnestly, "I know nothing whatever beyond this—that I saw the hand of my dear kind Miss Lucretia; that I felt, I hardly knew why, that both you and she would not have those people discover it, which they would if the letter had been circulated from one to the other, for some one would have known the hand as well as myself, and therefore I spoke, without thinking, the first thing that came into my head."

"You—you have obliged me and my niece, sir," said the baronet, tremulously: and then with a forced and sickly smile, he added—"some foolish vagary of Lucretia's, I suppose; I must scold her for it. Say nothing about it, however, to any one."

"Oh no, sir!"

"Good-by, my dear Gabriel!"

"And that boy saved the honor of my neice's name — my mother's grandchild! Oh, God! this is bitter!—in my old age, too!"

He bowed his head over his hands, and tears forced themselves through his fingers He was long before he had courage to read the letter, though he little foreboded all the shock that it would give him. It was the first letter, not destined to himself, of which he had ever broken the seal. Even that recollection made the honorable old man pause; but his duty was plain and evident, as head of the house, and guardian to his niece. Thrice he wiped his spectacles; still they were dim, still the tears would come. He rose tremblingly, walked to the window, and saw the stately deer grouped in the distance, saw the church spire, that rose above the burial-vault of his ancestors, and his heart sunk deeper and deeper, as he muttered—"Vain pride! pride!" Then he crept to the door. and locked it, and at last, seating himself firmly, as a wounded man to some terrible operation, he read the letter.

Heaven support thee, old man! thou hast to pass through the bitterest trial which honor and affection can undergo;—household treason! When the wife lifts high the blushless front, and brazens out her guilt; when the child, with loud voice, throws off all control, and makes boast of disobedience, man revolts at the audacity; his spirit arms against his wrong; its face, at least, is bare; the blow, if sacrilegious, is direct. But, when mild words and soft kisses conceal the worst foe Fate can arm—when amidst the confidence of the heart starts up the form of Perfidy—when out from the reptile swells the fiend in its terror—when the breast on which man leaned for comfort, has taken counsel to deceive him—when he learns, that day after day, the life entwined with his own has been a lie and a stagemime, he feels not the softness of grief, nor the absorption of rage; it is mightier than grief, and more withering than rage; it is a horror that appals. The heart does not bleed; the tears do not flow, as in woes to which humanity is commonly subjected; it is as if something that violates the course of nature had taken place; something monstrous and out of all thought and forewarning; for the domestic traitor is a being apart from the orbit of criminals; the felon has no fear of his innocent children; with a price on his head, he lays it in safety on the bosom of his wife. In his *home*, the ablest man, the most subtle and suspecting, can be as much a dupe as the simplest. Were it not so as the rule, and the exceptions most rare, this world were the riot of a hell!

And therefore it is that to the household perfidy, in all lands, in all ages, God's curse seems to cleave, and to God's curse man abandons it: he does not honor it by hate, still less will he lighten and share the guilt by descending to revenge. He turns aside with a sickness and loathing, and leaves Nature

to purify from the earth the ghastly phenomenon she abhors.

Old man, that she wilfully deceived thee—that she abused thy belief—and denied to thy question—and profaned maidenhood to stealth—all this might have galled thee,—but to these wrongs old men are subjected;—they give mirth to our farces;—maid and lover are privileged impostors. But to have counted the sands in thine hour-glass, to have sate by thy side, marvelling when the worms should have thee—and looked smiling on thy face for the signs of the death-writ,—die quick, old man, the executioner hungers for the fee!

There were no tears in those eyes when they came to the close—the letter fell noiselessly to the floor; and the head sank on the breast, and the hands drooped upon the poor crippled limbs, whose crawl in the sunshine hard youth had grudged. He felt humbled, stunned—crushed; the pride was clean gone from him; the cruel words struck home—worse than a cipher did he then but cumber the earth? At that moment, old Ponto, the setter, shook himself, looked up, and laid his head in his master's lap; and Dash, jealous, rose also, and sprang, not actively, for Dash was old, too, upon his knees, and licked the numbed drooping hands. Now, people praise the fidelity of dogs till the theme is worn out, but nobody knows what a dog is, unless he has been deceived by men; then, that honest face; then, that sincere caress; then, that coaxing whine that never lied! Well, *then*—what then? A dog is long lived if he live to ten years—small career this to truth and friendship! Now, when Sir Miles felt that he was not deserted, and his look met those four fond eyes, fixed with that strange wistfulness which, in our hours of trouble, the eyes of a dog sympathizingly assume—an odd thought for a sensible man passed into him—showing, more than pages of sombre elegy, how deep was the sudden misanthropy that blackened the world around. "When I am dead," ran that thought, "is there one human being whom I can trust to take charge of the old man's dogs?"

So—let the scene close!

CHAPTER VI.

The Will

THE next day, or rather the next evening, Sir Miles St. John was seated before his unshared chicken; seated alone, and vaguely surprised at himself, in a large comfortable room in his old Hotel, Hanover-square;—yes, he had escaped. Hast thou, O Reader, tasted the luxury of escape from a home where the charm is broken—where Distrust looks askant from the Lares! In vain had Dalibard remonstrated, conjured up dangers, and asked at least to accompany him. Excepting his dogs and his old valet, who was too like a dog in his fond fidelity to rank amongst bipeds, Sir Miles did not wish to have about him a single face, familiar at Laughton,—Dalibard especially. Lucretia's letter had hinted at plans and designs in Dalibard. It might be unjust, it might be ungrateful, but he grew sick at the thought that he was the centre stone of stratagems and plots. The smooth face of the Provençal took a wily expression in his eyes; nay, he thought his very footmen watched his steps as if to count how long before they followed his bier! So, breaking, from all roughly with a shake of his head, and a laconic assertion of business in London, he got into his carriage—his own old bachelor's lumbering travelling carriage—and bade the post-boys drive fast, fast. Then, when he felt alone—quite alone—and the gates of the lodge swung behind him, he rubbed his hands with a schoolboy's glee, and chuckled loud, as if he enjoyed not only the sense but the fun of his safety—as if he had done something prodigiously cunning and clever.

So when he saw himself snug in his old well-remembered hotel, in the same room as of yore—when returned, brisk and gay, from the breezes of Weymouth, or the *brouillards* of Paris, he thought he shook hands again with his youth. Age and lameness, apoplexy and treason, all were forgotten for the moment. And when, as the excitement died, those grim spectres came back again to his thoughts, they found their victim braced and prepared, standing erect on that hearth, for whose hospitality he paid his guinea a-day—his front proud and defying. He felt yet that he had fortune and power, that a movement of his

hand could raise and strike down, that, at the verge of the tomb, he was armed, to punish or reward, with the balance and the sword. Tripped in the smug waiter, and announced "Mr. Parchmount."

"Set a chair, and show him in."

The lawyer entered.

"My dear Sir Miles, this is indeed a surprise. What has brought you to town?"

"The common whim of the old, sir. I would alter my will."

Three days did lawyer and client devote to the task, for Sir Miles was minute, and Mr. Parchmount was precise; and the little difficulties arose, and changes in the first outline were made; and Sir Miles, from the very depth of his disgust, desired not to act only from passion. In that last deed of his life, the old man was sublime. He sought to rise out of the mortal, fix his eyes on the Great Judge, weigh circumstances and excuses, and keep justice even and serene.

Meanwhile, unconscious of the train laid afar, Lucretia reposed on the mine—*reposed*, indeed, is not the word, for she was agitated and restless, that Mainwaring had not obeyed her summons. She wrote to him again from Southampton the third day of her arrival; but before his answer came, she received this short epistle from London:

"Mr. Parchmount presents his compliments to Miss Clavering, and, by desire of Sir Miles St. John, requests her not to return to Laughton. Miss Clavering will hear further in a few days, when Sir Miles has concluded the business that has brought him to London."

This letter, if it excited much curiosity, did not produce alarm. It was natural that Sir Miles should be busy in winding up his affairs: his journey to London for that purpose was no ill omen to her prospects, and her thoughts flew back to the one subject that tyrannized over them. Mainwaring's reply, which came two days afterwards, disquieted her much more. He had not found the letter she had left for him in the tree He was full of apprehensions; he condemned the imprudence of calling on her at Mr. Fielden's; he begged her to renounce the idea of such a risk. He would return again to Guy's Oak, and search more narrowly—had she changed the spot where the former letters were placed? Yet now, not even the non-receipt of her letter, which she ascribed to the care with which she had concealed it amidst the dry leaves and moss, disturbed her so much as the evident constraint with which Mainwaring wrote—the cautious and lukewarm remonstrance which answered her passionate appeal. It may be, that her very doubts, at times, of Mainwaring's affection had increased the ardor of her own attachment; for in some natures, the excitement of fear deepens love more than the calmness of trust. Now with the doubt for the first time flashed the resentment, and her answer to Mainwaring was vehement and imperious. But the next day came a messenger express from London, with a letter from Mr. Parchmount, that arrested for the moment even the fierce current of love.

When the task had been completed—the will signed, sealed, and delivered—the old man had felt a load lifted from his heart. Three or four of his old friends, *bons vivans* like himself, had seen his arrival duly proclaimed in the newspapers, and had hastened to welcome him. Warmed by the genial sight of faces associated with the frank joys of his youth, Sir Miles, if he did not forget the prudent counsels of Dalibard, conceived a proud bitterness of joy in despising them. Why take such care of the worn-out carcase? His will was made. What was left to life so peculiarly attractive? He invited his friends to a feast worthy of old; seasoned revellers were they, with a free gout for a vent to all indulgence. So they came; and they drank, and they laughed, and they talked back their young days: they saw not the nervous irritation, the strain on the spirits, the heated membrane of the brain, which made Sir Miles the most jovial of all. It was a night of nights—the old fellows were lifted back into their chariots or sedans. Sir Miles alone seemed as steady and sober as if he had supped with Diogenes. His servant, whose respectful admonitions had been awed into silence, lent him his arm to bed, but Sir Miles scarcely touched it. The next morning, when the servant (who slept in the same room) awoke, to his surprise, the glare of a candle streamed on his eyes; he rubbed them: could he see right?—Sir Miles was seated at the table—he must have got up, and lighted a candle to write—noiselessly, indeed. The servant looked and looked, and the stillness of Sir Miles awed him: he was seated on an arm-chair, leaning back. As awe

succeeded to suspicion, he sprang up, approached his master, took his hand: it was cold, and fell heavily from his clasp—Sir Miles must have been dead for hours.

The pen lay on the ground, where it had dropped from the hand; the letter on the table was scarcely commenced; the words ran thus—

"LUCRETIA,—You will return no more tomy house. You are free as if I were dead; but I shall be just *Would* that I had been so to your mother—to your sister! But I am old now, as you say, and ——"

To one who could have seen into that poor, proud heart, at the moment the hand paused for ever, what remained unwritten would have been clear. There, was first, the sharp struggle to conquer loathing repugnance, and address at all, the false and degraded one; then came the sharp sting of ingratitude—then the idea of the life grudged, and the grave desired—then the stout victory over scorn—the resolution to be just—then the reproach of the conscience, that for so far less an offence, the sister had been thrown aside—the comfort, perhaps, found in her gentle and neglected child, obstinately repelled—then the conviction of all earthly vanity and nothingness—the look on into life, with the chilling sentiment that affection was gone—that he could never trust again—that he was too old to open his arms to new ties; and then, before felt singly, all these thoughts united, and snapped the chord!

In anouncing his mournful intelligence, with more feeling than might have been expected from a lawyer (but even his lawyer loved Sir Miles,) Mr. Parchmount observed, 'that as the deceased lay at an hotel, and as Miss Clavering's presence would not be needed in the performance of the last rites, she would probably forbear the journey to town. Nevertheless, as it was Sir Miles's wish that the will should be opened as soon as possible after his death, and it would doubtless, contain instructions as to his funeral, it would be well that Miss Clavering and her sister should immediately depute some one to attend the reading of the testament, on their behalf. Perhaps Mr. Fielden would kindly undertake that melancholy office.'

To do justice to Lucretia, it must be said, that her first emotions, on the receipt of this letter, were those of a poignant and remorseful grief, for which she was unprepared. But how different it is to count on what shall follow death, and to know that death has come! Susan's sobbing sympathy availed not, nor Mr. Fielden's pious and tearful exhortations; her own sinful thoughts and hopes came back to her, haunting and stern as furies. She insisted at first upon going to London—gazing once more on the clay: nay, the carriage was at the door, for all yielded to her vehemence; but then her heart misgave her; she did not dare to face the dead! Conscience waved her back from the solemn offices of nature; she hid her face with her hands, shrunk again into her room; and Mr. Fielden, assuming unbidden the responsibility, went alone.

Only Vernon (summoned from Brighton), the good clergyman, and the lawyer, to whom, as sole executor, the will was addressed, and in whose custody it had been left, were present when the seal of the testament was broken. The will was long, as is common when the dust that it disposes of covers some fourteen or fifteen thousand acres. But out of the mass of technicalities and repetitions, these points of interest rose salient—To Charles Vernon, of Vernon Grange, Esq., and his heirs by him lawfully begotten, were left all the lands and woods and manors that covered that space in the Hampshire map, known by the name of the "Laughton property," on condition that he and his heirs assumed the name and arms of St. John; and on the failure of Mr. Vernon's issue, the estate passed, first (with the same conditions) to the issue of Susan Mivers; next, to that of Lucretia Clavering. There the entail ceased—and the contingency fell the rival ingenuity of lawyers in hunting out, amongst the remote and forgotten descendants of some ancient St. John, the heir-at-law. To Lucretia Clavering, without a word of endearment, was bequeathed 10,000*l.*, the usual portion which the house of St. John had allotted to its daughters; to Susan Mivers the same sum, but with the addition of these words, withheld from her sister—"*and my blessing!*" To Olivier Dalibard, an annuity of 200*l.* a-year; to Honoré Gabriel Varney, 3000*l.*; to the Rev. Mathew Fielden, 4000*l.*; and the same sum to John Walter Ardworth To his favorite servant, Henry Jones, an ample provision, and the charge of his dogs Dash and Ponto, with an allowance therefor, to

be paid weekly, and cease at their deaths. Poor old man! he made it the interest of their guardian not to grudge *their* lees of life. To his other attendants, suitable and munificent bequests, proportioned to the length of their services. For his body, he desired it buried in the vault of his ancestors without pomp, but without a pretence to a humility which he had not manifested in life; and he requested that a small miniature in his writing-desk should be placed in his coffin. That last injunction was more than a sentiment, it bespoke the moral conviction of the happiness the original might have conferred on his life;—of that happiness his pride had deprived him; nor did he repent, for he had deemed pride a duty; but the mute likeness, buried in his grave—*that* told the might of the sacrifice he had made! Death removes all distinctions, and in the coffin the Lord of Laughton might choose his partner.

When the will had been read, Mr. Parchmount produced two letters, one addressed in the hand of the deceased to Mr. Vernon, the other ln the lawyer's own hand to Miss Clavering. The last enclosed the fragment found on Sir Mile's table, and her own letter to Mainwaring, redirected to her Sir Mile's boldest and stateliest autograph. He had, no doubt, meant to return it in the letter left uncompleted.

The letter to Vernon contained a copy of Lucretia's fatal epistle, and the following lines to Vernon himself:

"My dear Charles,—With much deliberation, and, with natural reluctance to reveal to you my niece's shame, I feel it my duty to transmit to you the accompanying enclosure, copied from the original with my own hand, which the task sullied. I do so first, because otherwise, you might, as I should have done in your place, feel bound in honor to persist in the offer of your hand—feel bound the more, because Miss Clavering is not my heiress; secondly, because had her attachment been stronger than her interest, and she had refused your offer, you might still have deemed her hardly and capriciously dealt with by me and not only sought to augment her portion, but have profaned the house of my ancestors by receiving her there, as an honored and welcomed relative and guest. Now, Charles Vernon, I believe, to the utmost of my poor judgment, I have done what is right and just. I have taken into consideration, that this young person has been brought up as a daughter of my house, and what the daughters of my house have received, I bequeath her; I put aside, as far as I can, all resentment of mere family pride; I show that I do so, when I repair my harshness to my poor sister, and leave *both* her children the same provision. And if you exceed what I have done for Lucretia, unless, on more dispassionate consideration than I can give, you conscientiously think me wrong, you insult my memory and impugn my justice; be it in this as your conscience dictates; but I entreat, I adjure, I command at least, that you never knowingly admit by a hearth, hitherto sacred to unblemished truth and honor, a person who has desecrated it with treason. As gentleman to gentleman, I impose on you this solemn injunction. I could have wished to leave that young woman's children barred from the entail; but our old tree has so few branches! You are unwedded; Susan, too. I must take my chance that Miss Clavering's children, if ever they inherit, do not imitate the mother. I conclude she will wed that Mainwaring; her children will have a low-born father. Well, *her* race, at least, is pure. Clavering and St. John are names to guarantee faith and honor; yet you see what *she* is!—Charles Vernon, if her issue inherit the soul of gentlemen, it must come, after all, not from the well-born mother! I have lived to say this; I, who—but perhaps if we had looked more closely into the pedigree of those Claverings!——

"Marry yourself—marry soon, Charles Vernon, my dear kinsman—keep the old house in the old line, and true to its old fame. Be kind and good to my poor—don't strain on the tenants. By the way, Farmer Strongbow owes three years' rent—I forgive him—pension him off—he can do no good to the land, but he was born on it, and must not fall on the parish. But to be kind and good to the poor, not to strain on the tenants, you must learn not to waste, my dear Charles. A needy man can never be generous without being unjust. How give, if you are in debt? You will think of this—now—*now*—while your good heart is soft—while your feelings are moved. Charley Vernon, I think you will shed a tear when you see my arm-chair still and empty. And I would have left you the care of my dogs, but you are thoughtless, and will go much to London, and they are used to the country now. Old Jones will have a cottage in the village; he has promised to live there; drop in now and then, and see poor Ponto and Dash. It is late, and old friends come to dine here. So, if anything happens to me, and we don't meet again, good bye, and God bless you.

"Your affectionate kinsman,

"Miles St. John."

CHAPTER VII.

The Engagement.

It is somewhat less than three months after the death of Sir Miles St. John—November reigns in London. And "reigns" seems scarcely a metaphysical expression as applied to the sullen, absolute, sway, which that dreary Month—(first in the dynasty of Winter)—spreads over the passive, dejected city. Elsewhere, in England, November is no such gloomy grim fellow as he is described. Over the brown glebes and changed woods in the

country, his still face looks contemplative and mild, and he hast soft smiles, too, at times,—lighting up his taxed vassals the groves—gleaming where the leaves still clung to the boughs—and reflected in dimples from the waves which still glide free from his chains. But as a conqueror, who makes his home in the capital, weighs down with hard policy the mutinous citizens, long ere his iron influence is felt in the province, so the first tyrant of Winter has only rigor and frowns for London. The very aspect of the wayfarers has the look of men newly enslaved; cloaked and muffled, they steal to and fro through the dismal fogs. Even the children creep timidly through the streets; the carriages go cautious and hearse-like along; daylight is dim and obscure; the town is not filled, nor the brisk mirth of Christmas commenced; the unsocial shadows flit amidst the mist, like men on the eve of a fatal conspiracy. Each other month in London has its charms for the experienced.

Even from August to October, when The Season lies dormant, and Fashion forbids her sons to be seen within hearing of Bow, the true lover of London finds pleasure still at hand, if he search for her duly;—the early walks through the parks and green Kensington Gardens, which now change their character of resort, and seem rural and countrylike, but yet with more life than the country; for on the benches beneath the trees, and along the sward and up the malls, are living beings enough to interest the eye and divert the thoughts, if you are a guesser into character, and amateur of the human face; fresh nursery-maid and playful children, and the old shabby-genteel buttoned-up officer, musing on half-pay, as he sits alone in some alcove of Kenna, or leans pensive over the rail of the vacant Ring; and early tradesman, or clerk from the suburban lodging, trudging brisk to his business, for business never ceases in London; then at noon, what delight to escape to the banks at Putney or Richmond—the row up the river—the fishing-punt—the ease at your inn till dark !—or, if this tempt not, still, Autumn shines clear and calm over the roofs, where the smoke has a holiday; and how clean gleam the vistas through the tranquillized thoroughfares, and as you saunter along, you have all London to yourself, Andrew Selkirk, but with the mart of the world for your desert ! And when October comes on, it has one characteristic of spring, life busily returns to the city; you see the shops bustling up, trade flowing back; as birds scent the April, so the children of commerce plume their wings, and prepare for the first slack returns of the season. But November !—strange the taste, stout the lungs, grief-defying the heart of the visitor who finds charms and joy in a London November.

In a small lodging-house in Bulstrode-street, Manchester-square, grouped a family in mourning, who had had the temerity to come to town in November, for the purpose, no doubt, of raising their spirits. In the dull small drawing-room of the dull small house, we introduce to you, first, a middle-aged gentleman, whose dress showed, what dress now fails to show—his profession; nobody could mistake the cut of the cloth, and the shape of the hat, for he had just come in from a walk and not from discourtesy, but abstraction, the broad brim still shadowed his pleasant placid face. Parson spoke out in him, from beaver to buckle. By the coal fire, where, through volumes of smoke, fussed and flickered a pretension to flame, sate a middle-aged lady, whom, without being a conjuror, you would pronounce at once to be wife to the parson, and sundry children sate on stools all about her, with one book between them, and a low whispered murmur from their two or three pursed lips, announcing that that book was superfluous. By the last of three dim-looking windows, made dimmer by brown moreen draperies, edged genteelly with black cotton velvet, stood a girl of very soft and pensive expression of features—pretty, unquestionably—excessively pretty—but there was something so delicate and elegant about her—the bend of her head, the shape of her slight figure, the little fair hands crossed one on each other, as the face mournfully and listlessly turned to the window—that 'pretty' would have seemed a word of praise, too often proffered to milliner and serving maid; nevertheless, it was perhaps the right one;—handsome would have implied something statelier and more commanding—beautiful, greater regularity of feature, or richness of coloring. The parson, who, since his entrance, had been walking up and down the small room, with his hands behind him, glancing now and then at the young lady, but not speaking, at length paused from the monoto-

nous exercise, by the chair of his wife, and touched her shoulder. She stopped from her work, which, more engrossing than elegant, was nothing less than what is technically called "the taking in" of a certain blue jacket, which was about to pass from Matthew, the eldest born, to David, the second, and looked up at her husband affectionately; her husband however spoke not, he only made a sign, partly with his eyebrow, partly with a jerk of his thumb over his right shoulder, in the direction of the young lady we have described, and then completed the pantomime with a melancholy shake of the head. The wife turned round, and looked hard, the scissors horizontally raised in one hand, while the other reposed on the cuff of the jacket. At this moment a low knock was heard at the street-door. The worthy pair saw the girl shrink back, with a kind of tremulous movement; presently there came the sound of a footstep below—the creak of a hinge on the ground floor—and again, all was silent.

"That is Mr. Mainwaring's knock," said one of the children.

The girl left the room abruptly, and, light as was her step, they heard her steal up the stairs.

"My dears," said the parson, "it wants an hour yet to dark, you may go and walk in the square."

"'Tis so dull in that ugly square, and they won't let us into the green. I am sure we'd rather stay here," said one of the children, as spokesman for the rest, and they all nestled closer round the hearth.

"But, my dears," said the parson, simply, "I want to talk alone with your mother. However, if you like best to go and keep quiet in your own room, you may do so."

"Or we can go into Susan's?"

"No," said the parson; "you must not disturb Susan."

"She never *used* to care about being disturbed. I wonder what's come to her?"

The parson made no rejoinder to this half-petulant question. The children consulted together a moment, and resolved that the square, though so dull, was less dull than their own little attic. That being decided, it was the mother's turn to address them. And though Mr. Fielden has as anxious and fond as most fathers, he grew a little impatient before comforters, kerchiefs, and muffatees were arranged, and minute exordiums as to the danger of crossing the street, and the risk of patting strange dogs, etc. etc., were half-way concluded;—with a shrug and a smile, he at length fairly pushed out the children, shut the door, and drew his chair close to his wife's.

"My dear," he began at once, "I am extremely uneasy about that poor girl."

"What! Miss Clavering? Indeed, she eats almost nothing at all, and sits so moping alone; but she sees Mr. Mainwaring every day. What can *we* do? She is so proud, I'm afraid of her."

"My dear, I was not thinking of Miss Clavering, though I did not interrupt you, for it is very true that she is much to be pitied."

"And I am sure it was for her sake alone that you agreed to Susan's request, and got Blackman to do duty for you at the vicarage, while we all came up here, in hopes London town would divert her. We left all at sixes and sevens; and I should not at all wonder if John made away with the apples."

"But, I say," resumed the parson, without heeding that mournful foreboding—"I say, I was then only thinking of Susan. You see how pale and sad she is grown."

"Why, she is so very soft-hearted, and she must feel for her sister."

"But her sister, though she thinks much, and keeps aloof from us, is not sad herself; only reserved. On the contrary, I believe she has now got over even poor Sir Miles's death."

"And the loss of the great property!"

"Fie, Mary!" said Mr. Fielden, almost austerely.

Mary looked down, rebuked, for she was not one of the high-spirited wives who despise their husbands for goodness.

"I beg pardon, my dear," she said, meekly; "it was very wrong in me; but I cannot—do what I will—I cannot like that Miss Clavering."

"The more need to judge her with charity. And if what I fear is the case, I'm sure we can't feel too much compassion for the poor blinded young lady."

"Bless my heart, Mr. Fielden, what is it you mean?"

The parson looked round to be sure the door was quite closed, and replied, in a whisper

—"I mean that I fear Willian Mainwaring loves not Lucretia, but Susan."

The scissors fell from the hand of Mrs. Fielden; and though one point stuck in the ground, and the other point, threatened war upon flounces and toes, strange to say, she did not even stoop to remove the *chevaus de frise.*

"Why, then, he's a most false-hearted young man!"

"To blame, certainly," said Fielden; "I don't say to the contrary. though I like the young man, and am sure that he's more timid than false. I may now tell you—for I want your advice, Mary—what I kept secret before. When Mainwaring visited us, many months ago, at Southampton, he confessed to me that he felt warmly for Susan, and asked if I thought Sir Miles would consent. I knew too well how proud the poor old gentleman was to give him any such hopes. So he left very honorably. You remember, after he went, that Susan's spirits were low — you remarked it."

"Yes, indeed, I remember. But when the first shock of Sir Miles's death was over, she got back her sweet color, and looked cheerful enough."

"Because, perhaps, then she felt that she had a fortune to bestow on Mr. Mainwaring, and thought all obstacle was over."

"Why, how clever you are! How did you get at her thoughts?"

"My own folly—my own rash folly," almost groaned Mr. Fielden. "For, not guessing that Mr. Mainwaring could have got engaged meanwhile to Lucretia, and suspecting how it was with Susan's poor little heart, I let out, in a jest—Heaven forgive me!—what William had said; and the dear child blushed, and kissed me, and—why a day or two after, when it was fixed that we should come up to London, Lucretia informed me, with her freezing politeness, that she was to marry Mainwaring herself, as soon as her first mourning was over."

"Poor, dear—dear Susan!"

"Susan behaved like an angel; and when I broached it to her, I thought she was calm; and I am sure she prayed with her whole heart that both might be happy."

"I'm sure she did. What is to be done? I understand it all now. Dear me, dear me! —a sad piece of work, indeed." And Mrs Fielden abstractedly picked up the scissors.

"It was not till our coming to town, and Mr. Mainwaring's visits to Lucretia, that her strength gave way."

"A hard sight to bear: I never could have borne it, my love. If I had seen you paying court to another, I should have—I don't know what I should have done! But what an artful wretch this young Mainwaring must be."

"Not very artful; for you see that he looks even sadder than Susan. He got entangled somehow, to be sure. Perhaps he had given up Susan in despair; and Miss Clavering, if haughty, is no doubt a very superior young lady; and, I dare say, it is only now in seeing them both together, and comparing the two that he feels what a treasure he has lost. Well, what do you advise, Mary? Mainwaring, no doubt, is bound in honor to Miss Clavering; but she will be sure to discover, sooner or later, the state of his feelings, and then I tremble for both. I'm sure she will never be happy, while he will be wretched; and Susan —I dare not think upon Susan—she has a cough that goes to my heart."

"So she has; that cough—you don't know the money I spend on black-current jelly! What's my advice? why I'd speak to Miss Clavering at once, if I dared. I'm sure love never will break *her* heart; and she's so proud, she'd throw him off without a sigh, if she knew how things stood."

"I believe you are right," said Mr. Fielden, "for truth is the best policy after all. Still, it's scarce my business to meddle; and if it were not for Susan—well, well, I must think of it, and pray Heaven to direct me."

This conference suffices to explain to the reader the stage to which the history of Lucretia had arrived. Willingly we pass over what it were scarcely possible to describe—her first shock at the fall from the expectations of her life;—fortune, rank, and what she valued more than either, power—crushed at a blow. From the dark and sullen despair into which she was first plunged, she was roused into hope—into something like joy—by Mainwaring's letters. Never had they been so warm and so tender; for the young man felt not only poignant remorse that he had been the cause of her downfall (though she broke it to him with more delicacy than might

have been expected from the state of her feelings and the hardness of her character), but he felt also imperiously the obligations which her loss rendered more binding than ever. He persuaded, he urged, he forced himself into affection; and, probably, without a murmur of his heart, he would have gone with her to the altar, and, once wedded, custom and duty would have strengthened the chain imposed on himself, had it nnt been for Lucretia's fatal eagerness to see him, to come up to London where she induced him to meet her—for with her came Susan; and in Susan's averted face, and trembling hand, and mute avoidance of his eye, he read all which the poor dissembler fancied she concealed.

But the die was cast, the union announced, the time fixed, and day by day he came to the house, to leave it in anguish and despair. A feeling they shared in common caused these two unhappy persons to shun each other. Mainwaring rarely came into the usual sitting-room of the family; and when he did so, chiefly in the evening, Susan usually took refuge in her own room. If they met, it was by accident, on the stairs, or at the sudden opening of a door; then not only no word, but scarcely even a look was exchanged; neither had the courage to face the other. Perhaps, of the two, this reserve weighed most on Susan; perhaps she most yearned to break the silence, for she thought she divined the cause of Mainwaring's gloomy and mute constraint, in the upbraidings of his conscience, which might doubtless recall—if no positive pledge to Susan—at least, those words and tones which betray the one heart, and seek to allure the other; and the profound melancholy stamped on his whole person, apparent even to her hurried glance, touched her with a compassion free from all the bitterness of selfish reproach. She fancied she could die happy if she could remove that cloud from his brow, that shadow from his conscience. Die—for she thought not of life. She loved gently, quietly; not with the vehement passion that belongs to stronger natures; but it was the love of which the young and the pure have died. The face of the Genius was calm and soft; and only by the lowering of the hand do you see that the torch burns out, and that the image too serene for earthly love, is the genius of loving Death.

Absorbed in the egotism of her passion—increased, as is ever the case with women, even the worst, by the sacrifices it had cost her—and if that passion paused, by the energy of her ambition, which already began to scheme and re-construct new scaffolds to repair the ruined walls of the past, Lucretia as yet had not detected what was so apparent to the simple sense of Mr. Fielden. That Mainwaring was grave, and thoughtful, and abstracted, she ascribed only to his grief at the thought of her loss, and his anxieties for her altered future; and in her efforts to console him, her attempts to convince him that greatness in England did not consist only in lands and manors—that in the higher walks of life which conduct to the Temple of Renown, the leaders of the procession are the aristocracy of knowledge and of intellect—she so betrayed, not generous emulation and high-souled aspiring, but the dark, unscrupulous, tortuous ambition of cunning, stratagem, and intrigue, that instead of feeling grateful and encouraged, he shuddered and revolted. How, accompanied and led by a spirit which he felt to be stronger and more commanding than his own—how preserve the whiteness of his soul, the uprightness of his honor? Already he felt himself debased. But in the still trial of domestic intercourse, with the daily, hourly dripping on the stone, in the many struggles between truth and falsehood, guile and candor, which men—and, above all, ambitious men—must wage, what darker angel would whisper him in his monitor? Still he was bound—bound with an iron band—he writhed, but dreamed not of escape.

The day after that of Fieldon's conference with his wife, an unexpected visitor came to the house. Olivier Dalibard called. He had not seen Lucretia since she had left Laughton, nor had any correspondence passed between them. He came at dusk, just after Mainwaring's daily visit was over, and Lucretia was still in the parlor which she had appropriated to herself. Her brow contracted as his name was announced, and the maid-servant lighted the candle on the table, stirred the fire, and gave a tug at the curtains. Her eye, glancing from his, round the mean room, with its dingy, horsehair furniture, involuntarily implied the contrast between the past state and the present, which his sight could scarcely help to impress on her. But she

welcomed him with her usual stately composure, and without reference to what had been. Dalibard was secretly anxious to discover if she suspected himself of any agency in the detection of the eventful letter, and, assured by her manner that no such thought was yet harbored, he thought it best to imitate her own reserve. He assumed, however, a manner that, far more respectful than he ever before observed to his pupil, was nevertheless sufficiently kind and familiar to restore them gradually to their old footing; and that he succeeded was apparent, when, after a pause, Lucretia said abruptly—"How did Sir Miles St. John discover my correspondence with Mr. Mainwaring?"

"Is it possible that you are ignorant? Ah, how—how should you know it?" And Dalibard so simply explained the occurrence, in which, indeed, it was impossible to trace the hand that had moved springs which seemed so entirely set at work by an accident, that despite the extreme suspiciousness of her nature, Lucretia did not see a pretence for accusing him. Indeed, when he related the little subterfuge of Gabriel, his attempt to save her by taking the letter on himself, she felt thankful to the boy, and deemed Gabriel's conduct quite in keeping wirh his attachment to herself. And this accounted satisfactorily for the only circumstance that had ever troubled her with a doubt—viz., the legacy left to Gabriel. She knew enough of Sir Miles to be aware that he would be grateful to any one who had saved the name of his niece, even while most embittered against her, from the shame attached to clandestine correspondence.

"It is strange, nevertheles," said she, thoughtfully, after a pause, "that the girl should have detected the letter, concealed, as it was, by the leaves that covered it."

"But," answered Dalibard, readily, "you see two or three persons had entered before and their feet must have displaced the leaves."

"Possibly; the evil is now past recall."

"And Mr. Mainwaring? do you still adhere to one who has cost you so much, poor child?"

"In three months more I shall be his wife."

Dalibard sighed deeply, but offered no remonstrance.

"Well," he said, taking her hand with mingled reverence and affection—"well, I oppose to your inclinations no more, for *now* there is nothing to risk, you are mistress of your own fortune; and since Mainwaring has talents, that fortune will suffice for a career. Are you at length convinced that I have conquered my folly? that I was disinterested when I incurred your displeasure? If so, can you restore to me your friendship? You will have some struggle with the world, and, with my long experience of men and life, even I, the poor exile, may assist you."

And so thought Lucretia; for with some dread of Dalibard's craft, she yet credited his attachment to herself, and she felt profouud admiration for an intelligence more consummate and accomplished than any ever yet submitted to her comprehension. From that time, Dalibard became an habitual visitor at the house; he never interfered with Lucretia's interviews with Mainwaring; he took the union for granted, and conversed with her cheerfully on the prospects before her; he ingratiated with the Fieldens, played with the children, made himself at home, and in the evenings when Mainwaring, as often as he could find the excuse, absented himself from the family circle, he contrived to draw Lucretia into more social intercouse with her homely companions than she had before condescended to admit. Good Mr. Fielden rejoiced: here was the very person, the old friend of Sir Miles, the preceptor of Lucretia herself, evidently most attached to her, having influence over her—the very person to whom to confide his embarrassment. One day, therefore, when Dalibard had touched his heart by noticing the paleness of Susan, he took him aside and told him all. "And now," concluded the pastor, hoping he had found one to relieve him of his dreaded and ungracious task, "don't you think that I—or, rather, you—as so old a friend, should speak frankly to Miss Claverring herself."

"No, indeed," said the Provençal, quickly; "if we spoke to her she would disbelieve us. She would no doubt appeal to Mainwaring, and Mainwaring would have no choice but to contradict us. Once put on his guard, he would control his very sadness. Lucretia offended, might leave your house, and certainly she would regard her sister as having influenced your confession—a position unworthy Miss Mivers. But do not fear; if the evil be so, it carries with its inevitable

remedy. Let Lucretia discover it herself; but, pardon me, she must have seen, at your first reception of Mainwaring, that he had before been acquainted with you?"

"She was not in the room when we first received Mainwaring, and I have always been distant to him, as you may suppose, for I felt disappointed and displeased. Of course, however, she is aware that we knew him before she did. What of that?"

"Why, do you think then he told her at Laughton of this acquaintance?—that he spoke of Susan?—I suspect not."

"I cannot say, I am sure," said Mr. Fielden.

"Ask her that question accidentally, and for the rest be discreet, my dear sir. I thank you for your confidence. I will watch well over my poor young pupil. She must not, indeed, be sacrificed to a man whose affections are engaged elsewhere."

Dalibard trod on air as he left the house; his very countenance had changed; he seemed ten years younger. It was evening; and suddenly, as he came into Oxford-street, he encountered a knot of young men—noisy and laughing loud—obstructing the pavement, breaking jests on the more sober passengers, and attracting the especial and admiring attention of sundry ladies in plumed hats and scarlet pelisses; for the streets then enjoyed a gay liberty which has vanished from London with the lanterns of the watchman. Noisiest, and most conspicuous of these descendants of the Mohawks, the sleek and orderly scholar beheld the childish figure of his son. Nor did Gabriel shrink from his father's eye, stern and scornful as it was, but rather braved the glance with an impudent leer.

Right, however, in the midst of the group, strode the Provençal, and laying his hand very gently on the boy's shoulder, he said—"My son, come with me."

Gabriel looked irresolute, and glanced at his companions. Delighted at the prospect of a scene, they now gathered round, with countenances and gestures that seemed little disposed to acknowledge the parental authority.

"Gentlemen," said Dalibard, turning a shade more pale, for though morally most resolute, physically he was not brave—"gentlemen, I must beg you to excuse me—this child is my son!"

"But Art is his mother," replied a tall raw-boned young man, with long tawny hair streaming down from a hat very much battered. "At the juvenile age, the child is consigned to the mother! Have I said it?" and he turned round theatrically to his comrades.

"Bravo!" cried the rest, clapping their hands.

"Down with all tyrants and fathers—hip, hip, hurrah!" and the hideous diapasion nearly split the drum of the ears into which it resounded.

"Gabriel," whispered the father, you had better follow me, *had you not?* Reflect!" So saying, he bowed low to the unpropitious assembly, and, as if yieldng the victory, stepped aside, and crossed over towards Bond-street.

Before the din of derision and triumph died away, Dalibard looked back and saw Gabriel behind him.

"Approach, Sir," he said, and as the boy stood still, he added; "I promise peace, if you will accept it."

"Peace, then!" answered Gabriel, and he joined his father's side.

"So," said Dalibard, "when I consented to your studying Art, as you call it, under your mother's most respectable brother, I ought to have contemplated what would be the natural and becoming companions of the rising Raffaele I have given to the world."

"I own, sir," replied Gabriel, demurely, "that they are riotous fellows, but some of them are clever, and——"

"And excessively drunk," interrupted Dalibard, examining the gait of his son. "Do you learn that accomplishment also, by way of steadying your hand for the easel?"

"No, sir; I like wine well enough, but I would not be drunk for the world. I see people when they are drunk are mere fools—let out their secrets, and show themselves up."

"Well said," replied the father almost admiringly; "but a truce with this bantering, Gabriel. Can you imagine that I will permit you any longer to remain with that vagabond Varney, and yon crew of *Vauriens?* You will come home with me; and if you must be a painter, I will look out for a more trustworthy master."

"I shall stay where I am," answered Gabriel, firmly, and compressing his lips with a force that left them bloodless.

"What, boy? do I hear right? Dare you disobey me? Dare you defy?"

"Not in your house, so I will not enter it again."

Dalibard laughed, mockingly.

"*Peste!* but this is modest! You are not of age, yet, Mr. Varney;—you are not free from a fathers tyrannical control."

"The law does not own you as my father, I am told, sir; you have said my name rightly—it is Varney, not Dalibard. We have no rights over each other; so at least says Tom Passmore, and his father's a lawyer!"

Dalibard's hand griped his son's arm fiercely. Despite his pain, which was acute, the child uttered no cry; but he growled beneath his teeth, "Beware! beware!—or my mother's son may avenge her death!"

Dalibard removed his hand, and staggered as if struck. Gliding from his side, Gabriel seized the occasion to escape; he paused, however, midway in the dull lamp-lit kennel, when he saw himself out of reach, and then approaching cautiously, said—"I know I am a boy, but you have made me man enough to take care of myself. Mr. Varney, my uncle, will maintain me—when of age, old Sir Miles has provided for me. Leave me in peace—treat me as free; and I will visit you, help you when you want me—obey you still,—yes, follow your instructions; for I know you are"—he paused—"you are *wise;* but if you seek again to make me your slave, you will only find me your foe. Good night; and remember that a bastard has no father!"

With these words he moved on, and hurrying down the street, turned the corner, and vanished.

Dalibard remained motionless for some minutes—at length, he muttered, "Ay, let him go, he is dangerous!—What son ever revolted even from the worst father, and throve in life?—Food for the gibbet! What matters?"

When next Dalibard visited Lucretia, his manner was changed—the cheerfulness he had before assumed gave place to a kind of melancholy compassion; he no longer entered into her plans for the future, but would look at her mournfully, start up, and walk away. She would have attributed the change to some return of his ancient passion, but she heard him once murmur with unspeakable pity, "Poor child—poor child!" A vague apprehension seized her—first, indeed, caught from some remarks dropped by Mr. Fielden, which were less discreet than Dalibard had recommended. A day or two afterwards, she asked Mainwaring, carelessly, "why he had never spoken to her at Laughton of his acquaintance with Fielden."

"You asked me that before," he said somewhat sullenly.

"Did I? I forget! But how was it? Tell me again."

"I scarcely know," he replied, confusedly; "we were always talking of each other, or poor Sir Miles—our own hopes and fears."

This was true, and a lover's natural excuse. In the present of love all the past is forgotten.

"Still," said Lucretia, with her sidelong glance—"still, as you must have seen much of my own sister——"

Mainwaring, while she spoke, was at work on a button on his gaiter—(gaiters were then worn tight at the ancle)—the effort brought the blood to his forehead.

"But," he said, still stooping at his occupation, "you were so little intimate with your sister,—I feared to offend. Family differences are so difficult to approach."

Lucretia was satisfied at the moment. For so vast was her stake in Mainwaring's heart, so did her whole heart and soul grapple to the rock left serene amidst the deluge, that she habitually and resolutely thrust from her mind all the doubts that at times invaded it.

"I know," she would often say to herself—"I know he does not love as I do—but man never can, never ought to love as woman! Were I a man, I should scorn myself if I could be so absorbed in one emotion as I am proud to be now—I, poor woman!—I know," again she would think,—"I know how suspicious and distrustful I am—I must not distrust *him*—I shall only irritate—I may lose him: I *dare* not distrust—it would be too dreadful."

Thus, as a system vigorously embraced by a determined mind, she had schooled and forced herself into reliance on her lover. His words now, we say, satisfied her at the moment; but afterwards, in absence, they were

recalled, in spite of herself—in the midst of fears, shapeless and undefined. Involuntarily she began to examine the countenance, the movements, of her sister—to court Susan's society more than she had done—for her previous indifference had now deepened into bitterness. Susan, the neglected and despised, had become her equal—nay, more than her equal—Susan's children would have precedence to her own in the heritage of Laughton! Hitherto she had never deigned to talk to her in the sweet familiarity of sisters so placed—never deigned to confide to her those feelings for her future husband, which burned lone and ardent in the close vault of her guarded heart. Now, however, she began to name him, wind her arm into Susan's, talk of love and home, and the days to come; and as she spoke she read the workings of her sister's face. That part of the secret grew clear almost at the first glance. Susan loved—loved William Mainwaring; but was it not a love hopeless and unreturned? Might not this be the cause that had made Mainwaring so reserved? He might have seen, or conjectured, a conquest he had not sought; and hence, with manly delicacy, he had avoided naming Susan to Lucretia; and now, perhaps, sought the excuses which at times had chafed and wounded her for not joining the household circle. If one of those who glance over these pages chance to be a person more than usually able and acute—a person who has loved and been deceived—he or she, no matter which, will perhaps recall those first moments when the doubt, long put off, insisted to be heard; a weak and foolish heart gives way to the doubt at once, not so the subtler and more powerful; it rather, on the contrary, recalls all the little circumstances that justify trust and make head against suspicion; it will not render the citadel at the mere sound of the trumpet; it arms all its forces, and bars its gates on the foe.

Hence it is, that the person most easy to dupe in matters of affection are usually those most astute in the larger affairs of life. Moliere, reading every riddle in the vast complexities of human character, and clinging, in self-imposed credulity, to his profligate wife, is a type of a striking truth. Still, a foreboding, a warning instinct withheld Lucretia from plumbing farther into the deeps of her own fears. So horrible was the thought that she had been deceived, that rather than face it, she would have preferred to deceive herself. This poor bad heart shrunk from inquiry—it trembled at the idea of condemnation. She hailed with a sentiment of release that partook of rapture, Susan's abrupt announcement one morning, that she had accepted an invitation from some relations of her father, to spend some time with them at their villa near Hampstead; she was to go the end of the week. Lucretia hailed it, though she saw the cause. Susan shrank from the name of Mainwaring on Lucretia's lips—shrank from the familiar intercourse so ruthlessly forced on her! With a bright eye, that day, Lucretia met her lover; yet she would not tell him of Susan's intended departure—she had not the courage.

Dalibard was foiled. This contradiction in Lucretia's temper—so suspicious—so determined—puzzled even his penetration. He saw that bolder tactics were required. He waylaid Mainwaring on the young man's way to his lodgings, and, after talking to him on indifferent matters, asked him carelessly, whether he did not think Susan far gone in a decline. Affecting not to notice the convulsive start with which the question was received, he went on—

"There is evidently something on her mind—I observe that her eyes are often red as with weeping—poor girl!—perhaps some silly love affair. However, we shall not see her again before your marriage; she is going away in a day or two; the change of air may possibly yet restore her: I own, though, I fear the worst. At this time of the year, and in your climate, such complaints as I take hers to be are rapid. Good day. We may meet this evening."

Terror-stricken at these barbarous words, Mainwaring no sooner reached his lodgings than he wrote and despatched a note to Fielden, entreating him to call.

The Vicar obeyed the summons, and found Mainwaring in a state of mind bordering on distraction; nor when Susan was named did Fielden's words take the shape of comfort; for he himself was seriously alarmed for her health; the sound of her low cough rang in his ears, and he rather heightened than removed the picture which haunted Mainwaring Susan, stricken, dying, broken-hearted!

Tortured both in heart and conscience, Mainwaring felt as if he had but one wish left in the world—to see Susan once more! What to say, he scarce knew; but for her to depart—depart, perhaps, to her grave, believing him coldly indifferent—for her not to know, at least, his struggles, and pronounce his pardon, was a thought beyond endurance. After such an interview both would have new fortitude—each would unite in encouraging the other in the only step left to honor. And this desire he urged upon Fielden with all the eloquence of passionate grief, as he entreated him to permit and procure one last conference with Susan. But this, the plain sense and straightforward conscience of the good man long refused. If Mainwaring had been left in the position to explain his heart to Lucretia, it would not have been for Fielden to object; but to have a clandestine interview with one sister while betrothed to the other, bore in itself a character too equivocal to meet with the simple Vicar's approval.

"What can you apprehend?" exclaimed the young man, almost fiercely—for, harassed and tortured, his mild nature was driven to bay. "Can you suppose that I shall encourage my own misery by the guilty pleadings of unavailing love? All that I ask is the luxury—yes, the luxury, long unknown to me, of candor—to place fairly and manfully before Susan the position in which fate has involved me. Can you suppose that we shall not both take comfort and strength from each other? Our duty is plain and obvious; but it grows less painful, encouraged by the lips of a companion in suffering. I tell you fairly, that see Susan I will and must. I will watch round her home wherever it be—hour after hour—come what may, I will find my occasion. Is it not better that the interview should be under your roof, within the same walls which shelter her sister? *There*, the place itself imposes restraint on despair. Oh, sir, this is no time for formal scruples—be merciful, I beseech you, not to me, but to Susan. I judge of her by myself. I know that I shall go to the altar more resigned to the future, if for once I can give vent to what weighs upon my heart. She will then see as I do, that the path before me is inevitable, she will compose herself to face the fate that compels us. We shall swear tacitly to each other, not to love, but to conquer love. Believe me, sir, I am not selfish in this prayer: an instinct, the intuition which human grief has into the secrets of human grief, assures me that that which I ask, is the best consolation you can afford to Susan. You own she is ill—suffering. Are not your fears for her very life—O Heaven, for her very life—gravely awakened? And yet you see, we have been silent to each other! Can speech be more fatal in its results than silence? Oh, for her sake hear me!"

The good man's tears fell fast—his scruples were shaken; there was truth in what Mainwaring urged. He did not yield; but he promised to reflect, and inform Mainwaring, by a line, in the evening. Finding this was all he could effect, the young man at last suffered him to leave the house, and Fielden hastened to take counsel of Dalibard; that wily persuader soon reasoned away Mr. Fielden's last faint objection—it now only remained to procure Susan's assent to the interview, and to arrange that it should be undisturbed. Mr. Fielden should take out the children the next morning. Dalibard volunteered to contrive the absence of Lucretia at the hour appointed. Mrs. Fielden, alone, should remain within, and might, if it were judged proper, be present at the interview, which was fixed for the forenoon in the usual drawing-room. Nothing but Susan's consent was now necessary, and Mr. Fielden ascended to her room. He knocked twice—no sweet voice bade him enter; he opened the door gently—Susan was in prayer. At the opposite corner of the room, by the side of her bed, she knelt, her face buried in her hands, and he heard, low and indistinct, the murmur broken by the sob. But, gradually, and, as he stood unpreceived, sob and murmur ceased—prayer had its customary and blessed effect with the pure and earnest. And when Susan rose, though the tears yet rolled down her cheeks, the face was serene as an angel's.

The pastor approached, and took her hand;—a blush then broke over her countenance—she trembled, and her eyes fell on the ground. "My child," he said solemnly, "God will hear you!" And, after those words, there was a long silence. He then drew her passively towards a seat, and sate down by her embarrassed how to begin. At length, he said, looking somewhat aside, "Mr. Mainwaring

has made me a request—a prayer which relates to you, and which I refer to you. He asks you to grant him an interview, before you leave us—to-morrow, if you will. I refused at first—I am in doubt still; for, my dear, I have always found that, when the feelings move us, our duty becomes less clear to the human heart—corrupt, we know—but still it is often a safer guide than our reason; I never knew reason unerring, except in mathematics; we have no Euclid (and the good man smiled mournfully) in the problems of real life; I will not urge you one way or the other—I put the case before you. Would it, as the young man says, give you comfort and strength to see him once again while, while—in short, before your sister is—I mean before—that is, would it soothe you *now*, to have an unreserved communication with him? He implores it.—What shall I answer?"

"This trial, too!" muttered Susan, almost inaudibly—"this trial which I once yearned for"—and the hand clasped in Fielden's was as cold as ice; then, turning her eyes to her guardian somewhat wildly, she cried, "But to what end? what object? why should he wish to see me?"

"To take greater courage to do his duty—to feel less unhappy at—at"——

"I will see him," interrupted Susan, firmly, "he is right, it will strengthen both—I will see him!"

"But human nature is weak, my child; if my heart be so now, what will be yours?"

"Fear me not," answered Susan, with a sad wandering smile; and she repeated vacantly, "I will see him!"

The good man looked at her, threw his arms round her wasted form, and, lifting up his eyes, his lips stirred with such half-syllabled words as fathers breathe on high.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Discovery.

DALIBARD had undertaken to get Lucretia from the house; in fact, her approaching marriage rendered necessary a communication with Mr. Parchmount, as executor to her uncle's will, relative to the transfer of her portion; and she had asked Dalibard to accompany her thither, for her pride shrank from receiving the lawyer in the shabby parlor of the shabby lodging-house; she therefore, that evening, fixed the next day, before noon, for the visit. A carriage was hired for the occasion, and, when it drove off, Mr. Fielden took his children a walk to Primrose Hill, and called, as was agreed, on Mainwaring by the way.

The carriage had scarcely rattled fifty yards through the street when Dalibard fixed his eyes, with deep and solemn commiseration, on Lucretia. Hitherto, with masterly art, he had kept aloof from direct explanations with his pupil; he knew that she would distrust no one like himself. The plot was now ripened, and it was time for the main agent to conduct the catastrophe. The look was so expressive that Lucretia felt a chill at her heart, and could not help exclaiming, "What has happened? you have some terrible tidings to communicate?"

"I have indeed to say that which may, perhaps, cause you to hate me for ever; as we hate those who report our afflictons. I must endure this; I have struggled long between my indignation and my compassion. Rouse up your strong mind, and hear me. Mainwaring loves your sister!"

Lucretia uttered a cry that seemed scarcely to come from a human voice—

"No—no!" she gasped out, "do not tell me. I will hear no more—I will not believe you!"

With an inexpressible pity and softness in his tone, this man, whose career had given him such profound experience in the frailties of the human heart, continued: "I do not ask you to believe me, Lucretia; I would not now speak, if you had not the opportunity to convince yourself; even those with whom you live are false to you; at this moment, they have arranged all, for Mainwaring to steal, in your absence, to your sister; in a few moments more he will be with her, if you yourself would learn what passes between them, you have the power."

"I have—I have not—not—the courage; —drive on—faster—faster."

Dalibard again was foiled. In this strange cowardice, there was something so terrible, yet so touching, that it became sublime—it

was the grasp of a drowning soul at the last plank.

"You are right, perhaps," he said after a pause; and wisely forbearing all taunt and resistance, he left the heart to its own workings.

Suddenly Lucretia caught at the check-string—"Stop," she exclaimed—"stop! I will not, I cannot endure this suspense, to last through a life! I will learn the worst. Bid him drive back."

"We must descend and walk; you forget we must enter unsuspected; and Dalibard, as the carriage stopped, opened the door, and let down the steps.

"Lucretia recoiled, then pressing one hand to her heart, she descended without touching the arm held out to her.

Dalibard bade the coachman wait, and they walked back to the house.

"Yes, he may see her," exclaimed Lucretia, her face brightening. "Ah, *there* you have not deceived me; I see your stratagem—I despise it; I know she loves him; she has sought this interview. He is so mild and gentle, so fearful to give pain; he has consented, from pity—that is all. Is he not pledged? He, so candid, so ingenuous! There must be truth somewhere in the world. If he is false, where find truth? Dark man, must I look for it in you?—*you!*"

"It is not my truth I require you to test; I pretend not to truth universal; I can be true to one, as you may yet discover: but I own your belief is not impossible; my interest in you may have made me rash and unjust—what you may over-hear, far from destroying, may confirm for ever your happiness. Would that it may be so!"

"It *must* be so," returned Lucretia, with a fearful gloom on her brow and in her accent; "I will interpret every word to my own salvation."

Dalibard's countenance changed, despite his usual control over it. He had set all his chances upon this cast, and it was more hazardous than he had deemed. He had counted too much upon the jealousy of common natures. After all, how little to the ear of one resolved to deceive herself might pass between these young persons, meeting not to avow attachment, but to take courage from each other! what restraint might they impose on their feelings! Still the game must be played out.

As they now neared the house, Dalibard looked carefully round, least they should encounter Mainwaring on his way to it. He had counted on arriving before the young man could get there.

"But," said Lucretia, breaking silence with an ironical smile—"but (for your tender anxiety for me has, no doubt, provided all means and contrivance, all necessary aids to baseness and eaves-dropping, that can assure my happiness), how am I to be present at this interview?"

"I have provided, as you say," answered Dalibard, in the tone of a man deeply hurt "those means which I, who have found the world one foe and one traitor, deemed the best, to distinguish falsehood from truth. I have arranged that we shall enter the house unsuspected. Mainwaring and your sister will be in the drawing-room—the room next to it will be vacant, as Mr. Fielden is from home; there is but a glass door between the two chambers."

"Enough, enough!" and Lucretia turned round, and placed her hand lightly on the Provençal's arm. "The next hour will decide whether the means you suggest, to learn truth and defend safety, will be familiar or loathsome to me for life—will decide whether trust is a madness—whether you, my youth's teacher, are the wisest of men, or only the most dangerous."

"Believe me, or not, when I say, I would rather the decision should condemn me; for I, too, have need of confidence in men."

Nothing further was said; the dull street was quiet and desolate as usual. Dalibard had taken with him the key of the house-door. The door opened noiselessly—they were in the house. Mainwaring's cloak was in the hall; he had arrived a few moments before them. Dalibard pointed silently to that evidence in favor of his tale. Lucretia bowed her head, but with a look that implied defiance; and (still without a word) she ascended the stairs, and entered the room appointed for concealment. But as she entered, at the further corner of the chamber she saw Mrs. Fielden seated—seated, remote and out of hearing. The good-natured woman had yielded to Mainwaring's prayer, and Susan's silent look that enforced it, to let their interview be un-

witnessed. She did not perceive Lucretia till the last walked glidingly, but firmly, up to her, placed a burning hand on her lips, and whispered—"Hush, betray me not; my happiness for life—Susan's—his—are at stake! I must hear what passes; it is *my* fate that is deciding. Hush—I command!—for I have the right!"

Mrs. Fielden was awed and startled; and before she could recover even breath, Lucretia had quitted her side, and taken her post at the fatal door. She lifted the corner of the curtain from the glass panel, and looked in.

Mainwaring was seated at a little distance from Susan, whose face was turned from her. Mainwaring's countenance was in full view. But it was Susan's voice that met her ear; and though sweet and low, it was distinct, and even firm. It was evident from the words that the conference had but just begun.

"Indeed, Mr. Mainwaring, you have nothing to explain—nothing of which to accuse yourself. It was not for this, believe me"—and here Susan turned her face, and its aspect of heavenly innocence met the dry lurid eye of the unseen witness—"not for this, believe me, that I consented to see you. If I did so, it was only because I thought—because I feared from your manner, when we met at times, still more from your evident avoidance to meet me at all, that you were unhappy (for I know you kind and honest); unhappy at the thought that you had wounded me, and my heart could not bear that, nor, perhaps, my pride either. That you should have forgotten me ——"

"Forgotten you!"

"That you should have been captivated" (continued Susan, in a more hurried tone) "by one so superior to me in all things as Lucretia, is very natural. I thought, then—thought only—that nothing could cloud your happiness but some reproach of a conscience too sensitive. For this I have met you—met you without a thought which Lucretia would have a right to blame, could she read my heart; met you (and the voice for the first time faltered), that I might say, 'Be at peace: it is your sister that addresses you. Requite Lucretia's love—it is deep and strong; give her as she gives to you—a whole heart, and in your happiness, I, your sister—sister to both—*I* shall be blest.'" With a smile inexpressibly touching and ingenuous, she held out her hand as she ceased. Mainwaring sprang forward, and, despite her struggle, pressed it to his lips—his heart.

"Oh," he exclaimed, in broken accents, which gradually became more clear and loud, "what—what have I lost!—loved for ever! No, no, I will be worthy of you! I do not—I dare not say that I love you still! I feel what I owe to Lucretia. How I became first ensnared, infatuated; how, with your image graven so deeply here——"

"Mainwaring—Mr. Mainwaring—I must not hear you. Is this your promise?"

"Yes, you must hear me yet. How I became engaged to your sister—so different, indeed, from you—I start in amaze and bewil derment when I seek to conjecture. But so it was. For me she has forfeited fortune, rank—all which that proud, stern heart so prized and coveted. Heaven is my witness how I have struggled to repay her affection with my own; if I cannot succeed, at least, all that faith and gratitude can give are hers. Yes; when I leave you, comforted by your forgiveness, your prayers, I shall have strength to tear you from my heart—it is my duty—my fate. With a firm step I will go to these abhorred nuptials. Oh, shudder not; turn not away! Forgive the word; but I must speak—my heart will out—yes, abhorred nuptials! Between my grave and the altar, would—would that I had a choice!"

From this burst, which in vain from time to time Susan had sought to check, Mainwaring was startled by an apparition which froze his veins, as a ghost from the grave. The door was thrown open, and Lucretia stood in the aperture—stood, gazing on him, face to face; and her own was so colorless, so rigid, so locked in its livid and awful solemnity of aspect, that it was, indeed, as one risen from the dead.

Dismayed by the abrupt cry, and the changed face of her lover, Susan turned and beheld her sister. With the impulse of the pierced and loving heart, which divined all the agony inflicted, she sprang to Lucretia's side—she fell to the ground, and clasped her knees.

"Do not heed—do not believe him: it is but the frenzy of a moment. He spoke but to deceive me—*me*, who loved him once! Mine alone—mine is the crime. He knows

all your worth; pity—pity—pity on yourself, on him—on me!"

Lucretia's eyes fell with the glare of a fiend upon the imploring face lifted to her own. Her lips moved, but no sound was audible. At length she drew herself from her sister's clasp, and walked steadily up to Mainwaring. She surveyed him with a calm and cruel gaze, as if she enjoyed his shame and terror. Before, however, she spoke, Mrs. Fielden, who had watched, as one spell-bound, Lucretia's movements, and without hearing what had passed, had the full foreboding of what would ensue, but had not stirred till Lucretia herself terminated the suspense, and broke the charm of her awe,—before she spoke, Mrs. Fielden rushed in, and giving vent to her agitation in loud sobs, as she threw her arms round Susan, who was still kneeling on the floor, brought something of grotesque to the more tragic and fearful character of the scene.

"My uncle was right; there is neither courage nor honor in the low-born! He, the schemer, too, is right. All hollow—all false!" Thus said Lucretia, with a strange sort of musing accent, at first scornful, at last only quietly abstracted. "Rise, sir," she then added, with her most imperious tone; "do you not hear your Susan weep? do you fear in my presence to console her? Coward to her, as forsworn to me. Go, sir, you are free!"

"Hear me," faltered Mainwaring, attempting to seize her hand; "I do not ask you to forgive; but——"

"Forgive, sir!" interrupted Lucretia, rearing her head, and with a look of freezing and unspeakable majesty, "there is only one person here who needs a pardon; but her fault is inexpiable: it is the woman who stopped beneath her?——"

With these words, hurled from her with a scorn which crushed, while it galled, she mechanically drew round her form her black mantle; her eye glanced on the deep mourning of the garment, and her memory recalled all that that love had cost her; but she added no other reproach. Slowly she turned away: passing Susan, who lay senseless in Mrs. Fielden's arms, she paused, and kissed her forehead.

"When she recovers, madam," she said, to Mrs. Fielden, who was moved and astonished by this softness, "say, that Lucretia Clavering uttered a vow, when she kissed the brow of William Mainwaring's future wife!"

Oliver Dalibard was still seated in the parlor below when Lucretia entered. Her face yet retained its almost unearthly rigidity and calm; but a sort of darkness had come over its ashen pallor—that shade so indescribable which is seen in the human face, after long illness, a day or two before death. Dalibard was appalled, for he had too often seen that hue in the dying, not to recognize it now. His emotion was sufficiently genuine to give more than usual earnestness to his voice and gesture, as he poured out every word that spoke sympathy and soothing. For a long time Lucretia did not seem to hear him: at last her face softened—the ice broke.

"Motherless—friendless—lone—alone for ever—undone—undone!" she murmured. Her head sunk upon the shoulder of her fearful counsellor, unconscious of its resting-place and she burst into tears—tears which, perhaps saved her reason or her life.

CHAPTER IX.

A Soul without Hope.

When Mr. Fielden returned home, Lucretia had quitted the house. She left a line for him in her usual bold, clear handwriting, referring him to his wife for explanation of the reasons that forbade a further residence beneath his roof. She had removed to an hotel, until she had leisure to arrange her plans for the future. In a few months, she should be of age; and in the meanwhile, who now living claimed authority over her? For the rest, she added, "I repeat what I told Mr. Mainwaring; all engagement between us is at an end; he will not insult me either by letter or by visit. It is natural that I should at present shrink from seeing Susan Mivers. Hereafter, if permitted, I will visit Mrs. Mainwaring."

Though all had chanced as Mr. Fielden had desired (if, as he had once meditated, he had spoken to Lucretia herself), though a marriage that could have brought happiness to none, and would have made the misery of two, was at an end, he yet felt a bitter pang, almost of remorse, when he learned what had occurred.

And Lucretia, before secretly disliked (if any one he could dislike), became dear to him at once, by sorrow and compassion. Forgetting every other person he hurried to the hotel Lucretia had chosen, but her coldness deceived and her pride repelled him. She listened drily to all he said, and merely replied, "I feel only gratitude at my eseape. Let this subject now close forever."

Mr. Fielden left her presence with less anxious and commiserating feelings—perhaps all had chanced for the best. And, on returning home, his whole mind became absorbed in alarm for Susan. She was delirious and in great danger; it was many weeks before she recovered. Meanwhile, Lucretia had removed into private apartments, of which she withheld the address. During this time, therefore, they lost sight of her.

If, amidst the punishments, with which the sombre imagination of poets has diversified the Realm of the tortured Shadows, it had depicted some soul condemned to look evermore down into an abyss—all change to its gaze forbidden — chasm upon chasm, yawning deeper and deeper, darker and darker, endless and infinite; so that, eternally gazing, the soul became, as it were, a part of the abyss, such an image would smybol forth the state of Lucretia's mind.

It was not the mere desolation of one whom love has abandoned and betrayed. In the abyss, were mingled inextricably together, the gloom of the past and of the future—there, the broken fortunes, the crushed ambition, the ruin of the worldly expectations long inseparable from her schemes; and amidst them, the angry shade of one more than father, whose heart she had wrung, and whose old age she had speeded to the grave. These sacrifices to love, while love was left to her, might have haunted her at moments, but a smile, a word, a glance banished the regret and the remorse. Now, love being raised out of life, the ruins of all else loomed dismal amidst the darkness; and a voice rose up, whispering "Lo, Fool! what thou hast lost because thou didst believe and love!" And this thought grasped together the two worlds of being—the what has been, and the what shall be. All hope seemed stricken from the future as a man strikes from the calculations of his income the returns from a property irrevocably lost. At her age, but few of her sex have parted with religion, but even such mechanical faith as the lessons of her childhood, and the constrained conformities with Christian ceremonies, had instilled, had long since melted away in the hard scholastic scepticism of her fatal tutor—a scepticism which had won, with little effort, a reason delighting in the maze of doubt, and easily narrowed into the cramped and iron logic of disbelief, by an intellect that scorned to submit where it failed to comprehend.

Nor had faith given place to those large moral truths from which philosophy has sought to restore the proud statue of pagan Virtue as a substitute for the meek symbol of the Christian cross. By temperament unsocial—nor readily moved to the genial and benevolent—that absolute egotism in which Oliver Dalibard centered his dreary ethics, seemed sanctioned to Lucretia by her studies into the motives of man and the history of the world. She had read the chronicles of states and the memoirs of the statesmen, and seen how craft carries on the movements of an age. Those Viscontis, Castruccios, and Medici—those Richelieus, and Mazarins, and de Retz—those Loyolas, and Mahomets, and Cromwells—those Monks and Godolphins—those Marlboroughs and Walpoles—those founders of history, and dynasties, and sects—those leaders and dupers of men, greater or lesser, corrupters or corrupt—all standing out prominent and renowned from the guiltless and laurelless obscure—seemed to win, by the homage of posterity, the rewards that attend the deceivers of their time. By a superb arrogance of generalization, she transferred into private life, and the rule of commonplace actions, the policy that, to the abasement of honor, has so often triumphed in the guidance of states. Therefore, betimes, the whole frame of society was changed to her eye, from the calm aspect it wears to those who live united with their kind—she viewed all seemings with suspicion; and before she had entered the world, prepared to live in it as a conspirator in a city convulsed, spying and espied, schemed against and scheming—here the crown for the crafty, there the axe for the out witted.

But her love, for love is trust, had led her half way forth from this maze of the intellect. That fair youth of inexperience and candor,

which seemed to bloom out in the face of her betrothed—his very shrinking from the schemes so natural to her, that to her they seemed even innocent—his apparent reliance on mere masculine ability, with the plain aids of perseverance and honesty—all had an attraction that plucked her back from herself. If she clung to him, firmly, blindly, credulously, it was not as the lover alone. In the lover, she beheld the good angel. Had he only died to her—still the angel smile would have survived and warned. But the man had not died—the angel itself had deceived;—the wings could uphold her no more—they had touched the mire, and were sullied with the soil;—with the stain, was forfeited the strength. All was deceit and hollowness and treachery. Lone again in the universe, rose the eternal *I*. So down into the abyss she looked, depth upon depth, and the darkness had no relief, and the deep had no end.

Olivier Dalibard alone, of all she knew, was admitted to her seclusion. He played his part as might be expected from the singular patience and penetration which belonged to genius of his character.

He forbore the most distant allusion to his attachment or his hopes. He evinced sympathy rather, by imitating her silence, than attempts to console. When he spoke, he sought to interest her mind, more than to heal directly the deep wounds of her heart. There is always to the afflicted a certain charm in the depth and bitterness of eloquent misanthropy. And Dalibard, who professed not to be a man-hater, but a world-scorner, had powers of language and of reasoning commensurate with his astute intellect and his profound research. His society became not only a relief, it grew almost a want, to that stern sorrower. But, whether alarmed or not by the influence she felt him gradually acquiring, or whether, through some haughty desire to rise once more aloft from the state of her rival and her lover, she made one sudden effort to grasp at the rank from which she had been hurled. The only living person, whose connection could reopen to her the great world, with its splendors and its scope to ambition, was Charles Vernon. She scarcely admitted to her own mind the idea that she would now accept, if offered, the suit she had before despised—she did not even contemplate the renewal of that suit—though there was something in the gallant and disinterested character of Vernon which should have made her believe he would regard their altered fortunes rather as a claim on his honor than a release to his engagements.

But hitherto no communication had passed between them, and this was strange if he retained the same intentions which he had announced at Laughton. Putting aside, we say, however, all such considerations, Vernon had sought her friendship, called her "cousin," enforced the distant relationship between them. Not as lover, but as kinsman, the only kinsman of her own rank she possessed—his position in the world, his connections, his brilliant range of acquaintance, made his counsel for her future plans, his aid in the re-establishment of her consequence (if not as wealthy, still as well born), and her admission amongst her equals, of price and value. It was worth sounding the depth of the friendship he had offered, even if his love had passed away with the fortune on which doubtless it had been based.

She took a bold step—she wrote to Vernon—not even to allude to what had passed between them: her pride forbade such unwomanly vulgarity. The baseness that was in her, took at least a more delicate exterior. She wrote to him simply and distantly, to state that there were some books and trifles of hers left at Laughton, which she prized beyond their trivial value; and to request, as she believed him to be absent from the hall, permission to call at her old home, in her way to a visit in a neighboring county, and point out to whomsoever he might appoint to meet her, the effects she deemed herself privileged to claim. The letter was one merely of business, but it was a sufficient test of the friendly feelings of her former suitor.

She sent this letter to Vernon's house in London, and the next day came the answer.

Vernon, we must own, entirely sympathized with Sir Miles, in the solemn injunctions the old man had bequeathed. Immediately after the death of one to whom we owe gratitude and love, all his desires take a sanctity irresistible and ineffable. We adopt his affection, his dislikes, his obligations and his wrongs. And after he had read the copy of Lucretia's letter, enclosed to him by Sir Miles, the con-

quest the poor baronet had made over resentment and vindictive emotion, the evident effort at passionless justice with which he had provided becomingly for his niece, while he cancelled her claims as his heiress, had filled Vernon with a reverence for his wishes and decisions, that silenced all those inclinations to over-generosity which an unexpected inheritance is apt to create towards the less fortunate expectants; nevertheless, Lucretia's direct application, her formal appeal to his common courtesy as host and kinsman, perplexed greatly a man ever accustomed to a certain chivalry towards the sex; the usual frankness of his disposition suggested, however, plain dealing as the best escape from his dilemma, and therefore he answered thus:

"MADAM,—Under other circumstances it would have given me no common pleasure to place the house, that you so long inhabited, again at your disposal. And I feel so painfully the position which my refusal of your request inflicts upon me, that rather than resort to excuses and pretexts, which, while conveying an impression of my sincerity, would seem almost like an insult to yourself, I venture frankly to inform you, that it was the dying wish of my lamented kinsman, in consequence of a letter which came under his eye, that the welcome you had hitherto received at Laughton should be withdrawn. Pardon me, Madam, if I express myself thus bluntly—it is somewhat necessary to the vindication of my character in your eyes, both as regards the honor of your request and my tacit resignation of hopes, fervently, but too presumptuously, entertained. In this most painful candor, Heaven forbid that I should add wantonly to your self-reproaches for the fault of youth and inexperience, which I should be the the last person to judge rigidly, and which, had Sir Miles's life been spared, you would doubtless have amply repaired. The feelings which actuated Sir Miles in his latter days might have changed: but the injunction those feelings prompted, I am bound to respect.

"For the mere matter of business, on which you have done me the honor to address me, I hare only to say, that any orders you may give to the steward, or transmit through any person you may send to the hall, with regard to the effects you so naturally desire to claim, shall be implicitly obeyed.

"And believe me, Madam, (though I do not presume to add those expressions, which might rather heighten the offence I fear this letter will give you), that the assurance of your happiness in the choice you have made, and which now no obstacle can oppose, will considerably lighten the pain with which I shall long recall my ungracious reply to your communication.

"I have the honor to be, etc., etc.

"C. VERNON ST. JOHN.

Brook Street, *Dec. 28th*, 18—."

The receipt of such a letter could hardly add to the profounder grief which preyed in the innermost core of Lucretia's heart, but in repelling the effort she had made to distract that grief by ambition, it blackened the sullen despondency with which she regarded the future. As the insect in the hollow snare of the ant-lion, she felt that there was no footing up the sides of the cave into which she had fallen—the sand gave way to the step. But despondency in her, brought no meekness—the cloud did not descend in rain;—resting over the horizon, its darkness was tinged with the fires which it fed. The heart, already so embittered, was stung and mortified into intolerable shame and wrath. From the home that should have been hers, in which, as acknowledged heiress, she had smiled down on the ruined Vernon, she was banished by him who had supplanted her, as one worthless and polluted. Though, from motives of obvious delicacy, Vernon had not said expressly that he had seen the letter to Mainwaring, the unfamiliar and formal tone which he assumed, indirectly declared it, and betrayed the impression it had made, in spite of his reserve. A living man then was in possession of a secret which justified his disdain, and that man was master of Laughton! The supprest ruge which embraced the lost lover, extended darkly over this witness to that baffled and miserable love. But what availed rage against either?

Abandoned and despoiled, she was powerless to avenge. It was at this time, when her prospects seemed most dark, her pride was most crushed, and her despair of the future at its height, that she turned to Dalibard as the only friend left to her under the sun. Even the vices she perceived in him became merits, for they forbade him to despise her. And now, this man rose suddenly into another and higher aspect of character: of late, though equally deferential to her, there had been something more lofty in his mien, more assured on his brow; gleams of a secret satisfaction, even of a joy, that he appeared anxious to suppress, as ill in harmony with her causes for dejection, broke out in his looks and words. At length, one day, after some preparatory hesitation, he informed her that he was free to return to France—that even without the peace between England and France, which (known under the name of the Peace of Amiens), had been just concluded, he should have crossed the channel. The advocacy and interest of friends, whom

he had left at Paris, had already brought him under the special notice of the wonderful man who then governed France, and who sought to unite in its service every description and variety of intellect. He should return to France, and then—why, then, the ladder was on the walls of Fortune and the foot planted on the step! As he spoke, confidently and sanguinely, with the verve and assurance of an able man who sees clear the path to his goal, as he sketched with rapid precision the nature of his prospects and his hopes, all that subtle wisdom which had before often seemed but vague and general, took practical shape and interest, thus applied to the actual circumstances of men; the spirit of intrigue, which seemed mean when employed on mean things, swelled into statesmanship and masterly genius to the listener, when she saw it linked with the large objects of masculine ambition. Insensibly, therefore, her attention became earnest—her mind aroused. The vision of a field, afar from the scenes of her humiliation and despair—a field for energy, stratagem, and contest—invited her restless intelligence. As Dalibard had profoundly calculated, there was no new channel for her affections—the source was dried up, and the parched sands heaped over it; but while the heart lay dormant, the mind rose, sleepless, chafed, and perturbed. Through the mind, he indirectly addressed and subtly wooed her.

"Such"—he said, as he rose to take leave—"such is the career, to which I could depart with joy if I did not depart alone!"

"Alone!" that word, more than once that day, Lucretia repeated to herself—"alone!"—and what career was left to her—she, *too*, alone!

In certain stages of great grief, our natures yearn for excitement. This has made some men gamblers; it has made even women drunkards—it had effect over the serene calm, and would-be divinity of the Poet-sage. When his son dies, Goethe does not mourn—he plunges into the absorption of a study, uncultivated before. But in the great contest of life, in the whirlpool of actual affairs, the stricken heart finds all—the gambling, the inebriation, and the study.

We pause here. We have pursued long enough that patient analysis, with all the food for reflection that it possibly affords to which we were insensibly led on by an interest, dark and fascinating, that grew more and more upon us, as we proceeded in our research into the early history of a person fated to pervert no ordinary powers into no commonplace guilt.

The charm is concluded—the circle closed round—the self-guided seeker after knowledge has gained the fiend for the familiar.

CHAPTER X.

The Reconciliation between Father and Son.

We pass over an interval of some months.

A painter stood at work at the easel; his human model before him. He was employed on a nymph—the Nymph Galatea. The subject had been taken before by Salvator, whose genius found all its elements in the wild rocks, gnarled fantastic trees, and gushing waterfalls of the landscape—in the huge ugliness of Polyphemus the lover—in the grace and suavity and unconscious abandonment of the nymph, sleeking her tresses dripping from the bath. The painter, on a larger canvas (for Salvator's picture, at least, the one we have seen, is among the small sketches of the great artistic creator of the romantic and grotesque), had transferred the subject of the master; but he had left subordinate the landscape and the giant, to concentrate all his art on the person of the Nymph. Middle-aged was the painter, in truth; but he looked old. His hair, though long, was gray and thin; his face was bloated by intemperance; and his hand trembled much, though from habit no trace of the tremor was visible in his work.

A boy near at hand, was also employed on the same subject, with a rough chalk and a bold freedom of touch. He was sketching *his* design of a Galatea and Polyphemus on the wall; for the wall was only white-washed, and covered already with the multiform vagaries whether of master or pupils; caricatures and demigods, hands and feet, torsos and monsters, and Venuses—the rude creations, all mutilated, jarring, and mingled, gave a cyincal, mocking, devil-may-care kind of aspect to the sanctum of art. It was like the dissection-room of the anatomist. The boy's sketch was more in harmony with the walls of the studio

than the canvass of the master. His nymph, accurately drawn from the undressed proportions of the Model down to the waist, terminated in the scales of a fish. The forked branches of the trees stretched weird and imp-like as the hands of skeletons. Polyphemus, peering over the rocks, had the leer of a demon; and in his gross features there was a certain distorted, hideous likeness of the grave and symmetrical lineaments of Olivier Dalibard.

All around was slovenly, squalid, and poverty-stricken; rickety, worn-out, rush-bottom chairs; unsold, unfinished pictures, pell-mell in the corner, covered with dust; broken casts of plaster; a lay-figure battered in its basket-work arms, with its doll-like face, all smudged and besmeared: a pot of porter and a noggin of gin on a stained deal table, accompanied by two or three broken, smoke-blackened pipes, some tattered song-books, and old numbers of the Convent-garden Magazine, betrayed the tastes of the artist, and accounted for the shaking hand and the bloated form.

A jovial, disorderly, vagrant dog of a painter, was Tom Varney!—a bachelor of course—humorous and droll—a boon companion, and a terrible borrower; clever enough in his calling; with pains and some method, he had easily gained subsistence and established a name; but he had one trick that soon ruined him in the busines-part of his profession. He took a fourth of his price in advance; and having once clutched the money, the poor customer might go hang for his picture! The only things Tom Varney ever fairly completed were those for which no order had been given; for in them, somehow or other, his fancy became interested, and on them he lavished the gusto which he really possessed. But the subjects were rarely saleable. Nymphs and deities undraperied have few worshippers in England amongst the buyers of furniture pictures." And, to say truth, nymph and deity had usually a very equivocal look; and if they came from the gods, you would swear it was the gods of the galleries of Drury. When Tom Varney sold a picture, he lived upon clover till the money was gone. But the poorer and less steady alumni of the rising school, especially those at war with the Academy from which Varney was excluded, pitied, despised, yet liked and courted him withal. In addition to his good qualities of blithe song-singer, droll story-teller, and stanch Bacchanalian, Tom Varney was liberally good-natured in communicating instruction really valuable to those who knew how to avail themselves of a knowledge he had made almost worthless to himself.

He was a shrewd, though good-natured critic, had many little secrets of coloring and composition, which an invitation to supper, or the loan of ten shillings, was sufficient to bribe from him. Ragged, out of elbows, unshaven, and slipshod, he still had his set, amongst the gay and the young—a precious master, a profitable set, for his nephew, Master Honoré Gabriel! But the poor rapscallion had a heart larger than many honest painstaking men. As soon as Gabriel had found him out, and entreated refuge from his fear of his father, the painter clasped him tight in his great slovenly arms, sold a Venus half-price, to buy him a bed and a wash-stand, and swore a tremendous oath, "that the son of his poor guillotined sister should share the last shilling in his pocket—the last drop in his can."

Gabriel, fresh from the cheer of Laughton, and spoiled by the prodigal gifts of Lucretia, had little gratitude for shillings and porter. Nevertheless, he condescended to take what he could get, while he sighed, from the depths of a heart in which cupidity and vanity had become the predominant rulers, for a destiny more worthy his genius, and more in keeping with the sphere from which he had descended.

The boy finished his sketch, with an impudent wink at the model, flung himself back on his chair, folded his arms, cast a discontented glance at the whitened seams of the sleeves, and soon seemed lost in his own reflections. The painter worked on in silence. The model, whom Gabriel's wink had aroused, half-flattered, half-indignant for a moment, lapsed into a doze. Outside the window, you heard the song of a canary—a dingy, smoke-colored canary—that seemed shedding its plumes, for they were as ragged as the garments of its master; still it contrived to sing—trill-trill-trill-trill-trill, as blithely as if free in its native woods, or pampered by fair hands in a glided cage. The bird was the only true artist there: it sang, as the poet sings, to obey its nature and vent its heart. Trill-trill-trillela-la-la-

trill-trill, went the song—louder, gayer than usual—for there was a gleam of April sunshine, struggling over the roof-tops. The song at length roused up Gabriel; he turned his chair round, laid his head on one side, listened, and looked curiously at the bird.

At length, an idea seemed to cross him: he rose, opened the window, drew in the cage, placed it on the chair, then took up one of his uncle's pipes, walked to the fire-place, and trust the shank of the pipe into the bars. When it was red-hot, he took it out by the bowl, having first protected his hand from the heat by wrapping round it his handkerchief; this done, he returned to the cage. His movements had wakened up the dozing model. She eyed them at first with dull curiosity, then with lively suspicion; and presently starting up with an exclamation, such as no novelist but Fielding dare put into the mouth of a female—much less a nymph of such renown as Galatea—she sprang across the room, well-nigh upsetting easel and painter, and fastened firm hold on Gabriel's shoulders.

"The varment!" she cried, vehemently; "the good-for-nothing varment! If it had been a jay, or a nasty raven, well and good!—but a poor little canary!"

"Hoity-toity! what are you about, nephew? What's the matter!" said Tom Varney, coming up to the strife. And, indeed, it was time, for Gabriel's teeth were set in his cat-like jaws, and the glowing point of the pipe-shank was within an inch of the cheek of the model.

"What's the matter?" replied Gabriel, sullenly; "why, I was only going to try a little experiment."

"An experiment? not on my canary, poor, dear little thing!—the hours and hours that creature has strained its throat to say—'sing and be merry,' when I had not a rap in my pocket! It would have made a stone feel to hear it."

"But I think I can make it sing much better than ever—only just let me try! They say, that if you put out the eyes of a canary, it ——" Gabriel was not allowed to conclude his sentence; for here rose that clamor of horror and indignation, from both painter and model, which usually greets the announcement of every philosophical discovery—at least, when about to be practically applied; and in the midst of the hubbub, the poor little canary, who had been fluttering about the cage to escape the hand of the benevolent operator, set up no longer the cheerful trill—trillela-la-trill, but a scared and heart-breaking chirp—a shrill, terrified twit-twit-twitter-twit.

"Damn the bird!—hold your tongues!" cried Gabriel Varney, reluctantly given away; but still eyeing the bird with the scientific regret with which the illustrious Majendie might contemplate a dog which some brute of a master refused to disembowel for the good of the colics of mankind.

The model seized on the cage, shut the door of the wires, and carried it off. Tom Varney drained the rest of his porter, and wiped his forehead with the sleeve of his coat.

"And to use my pipe for such cruelty! Boy, boy, I could not have believed it! But you were not in earnest—oh, no, impossible! Sukey, my love—Galatea, the divine—calm thy breast; Cupid did but jest:

'Cupid is the God of Laughter,
Quip, and jest, and joke, sir.'"

"If you don't whip the little wretch within an inch of his life, he'll have a gallows end on't," replied Galatea.

"Go, Cupid, go and kiss Galatea, and make your peace:

'Oh, leave a kiss within the cup,
And I'll not ask for wine!'

And 'tis no use asking for wine, or for gin either—not a drop in the noggin!"

All this while, Gabriel, disdaining the recommendations held forth to him, was employed in brushing his jacket with a very mangy-looking brush; and when he had completed that operation, he approached his uncle, and cooly thrust his hands into that gentleman's waistcoat-pockets.

"Uucle, what have you done with those seven shillings? I am going out to spend the day."

"If you give them to him, Tom, I'll scratch your eyes out," cried the model; "and then we'll see how *you'll* sing. Whip him, I say—whip him!"

"But, strange to say, this liberty of the boy's quite re-opened the heart of the uncle—it was a pleasure to him, who put his hands so habitually into other people's pockets, to be invested with the novel grandeur of the

man sponged upon. "That's right, Cupid, son of Cytherea; all's common property amongst friends. Seven Shillings, I have 'em not! 'They now are five who once were seven;' but such as they are, we'll share!

> 'Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
> Or both divide the crown.'"

"Crowns bear no division, my uncle," said Gabriel, drily—and he pocketed the five shillings. Then, having first secured his escape, by gaining the threshold, he suddenly seized one of the rickerty chairs by its leg, and regardless of the gallantries due to the sex, sent it right against the model, who was shaking her fist at him. A scream, and a fall, and a sharp twit from the cage, which was hurled nearly into the fire-place, told that the missive had taken effect. Gabriel did not wait for the probable re-action; he was in the streets in an instant.

"This won't do," he muttered to himself; "there is no getting on here. Foolish, drunken vagabond! no good to be got from him. My father is terrible, but he will make his way in the world. Umph! if I were but his match—and why not? I am brave, and he is not. There's fun, too, in danger."

Thus musing, he took his way to Dalibard's lodgings. His father was at home. Now, though they were but lodgings, and the street not in fashion, Olivier Dalibard's apartments had an air of refinement, and even elegance, that contrasted both the wretched squalor of the abode Gabriel had just left, and the meanness of Dalibard's former quarters in London. The change seemed to imply that the Provençal had already made some way in the world. And, truth to say, at all times, even in the lowest ebb of his fortunes, there was that indescribable neatness and formality of precision about all the exterior seemings of the *ci-devant* friend of the prim Robespierre which belong to those in whom order and method are strongly developed—qualities which give even to neediness a certain dignity. As the room and its owner met the eye of Gabriel, on whose senses all externals had considerable influence, the ungrateful young ruffian recalled the kind, tattered slovenly uncle, whose purse he had just emptied, without one feeling milder than disgust. Olivier Dalibard, always careful, if simple, in his dress, with his brow of grave intellectual power, and his mien imposing, not only from its calm, but from that nameless refinement which rarely fails to give to the student the air of a gentleman—Olivier Dalibard he might dread—he might even detest; but he was not ashamed of him.

"I said I would visit you, sir, if you would permit me," said Gabriel, in a tone of respect, not unmingled with some defiance, as if in doubt of his reception.

The father's slow full eye, so different from the sidelong furitive glance of Lucretia, turned on the son, as if to penetrate his very heart.

"You look pale and haggard, child: you are fast losing your health and beauty. Good gifts these, not to be wasted before they can be duly employed. But you have taken your choice. Be an artist—copy Tom Varney, and prosper."

Gabriel remained silent, with his eyes on the floor.

"You come in time for my farewell," resumed Dalibard. "It is a comfort, at least, that I leave your youth so honorably protected. I am about to return to my country—my career is once more before me!"

"Your country—to Paris?"

"There are fine pictures in the Louvre—a good place to inspire an artist!"

"You go alone, father!"

"You forget, young gentlemen, you disown me as father! Go alone! I thought I told you in the times of our confidence, that I should marry Lucretia Clavering. I rarely fail in my plans. She has lost Laughton, it is true, but ten thousand pounds will make a fair commencement to fortune, even at Paris. Well, what do you want with me, worthy godson of Honoré Gabriel Mirabeau?"

"Sir, if you will let me, I will go with you."

Dalibard shaded his brow with his hand, and reflected on the filial proposal. On the one hand, it might be convenient, and would certainly be economical to rid himself evermore of the mutinous son who had already thrown off his authority; on the other hand, there was much in Gabriel, mutinous and even menacing as he had lately become, that promised an unscrupulous tool or a sharp-witted accomplice, with interests that every year the ready youth would more and more discover were

bound up in his plotting father's. This last consideration, joined, if not to affection still to habit—to the link between blood and blood, which even the hardest find it difficult to sever, prevailed. He extended his pale hand to Gabriel, and said, gently—

"I will take you, if we rightly understand each other. Once again in my power, I might constrain you to my will, it is true. But I rather confer with you as man to man than as man to boy."

"It is the best way," said Gabriel firmly.

"I will use no harshness—inflict no punishment, unless, indeed, amply merited by stubborn disobedience or wilful deceit. But if I meet with these, better rot on a dunghill than come with me! I ask implicit confidence in all my suggestions, prompt submission to all my requests. Grant me but these, and I promise to consult your fortune as my own—to gratify your tastes as far as my means will allow—to grudge not your pleasures; and, when the age for ambition comes, to aid your rise if I rise myself; nay, if well contented with you, to remove the blot from your birth, by acknowledging and adopting you formally as my son."

"Agreed! and I thank you," said Gabriel. "And Lucretia is going, oh, I so long to see her!"

"See her—not yet; but next week."

"Do not fear that I should let out about the letter. I should betray myself if I did," said the boy, bluntly betraying his guess at his father's delay.

The evil scholar smiled.

"You will do well to keep it secret for your own sake; for mine, I should not fear. Gabriel, go back now to your master—you do right, like the rats, to run from the falling house. Next week, I will send for you, Gabriel!"

Not, however, back to the sudio went the boy. He sauntered leisurely through the gayest streets, eyed the shops, and the equipages, the fair women, and the well-dressed men—eyed with envy, and longings, and visions of pomps, and vanities to come; then, when the day began to close, he sought out a young painter, the wildest and maddest of the crew to whom his uncle had presented their future comrade and rival, and went with this youth, at half-price, to the theatre, not to gaze on the actors or study the play, but to stroll in the saloon. A supper in the *Finish* completed the void in his pockets, and concluded his day's rank experience of life.

By the grey dawn he stole back to his bed, and as he laid himself down, he thought with avid pleasure of Paris, its gay gardens, and brilliant shops, and crowded streets; he thought, too, of his father's calm confidence of success, of the triumph that already had attended his wiles—a confidence and a triumph which, exciting his reverence and rousing his emulation, had decided his resolution. He thought, too, of Lucretia, with something of affection, recalled her praises and bribes, her frequent mediation with his father, and felt that they should have need of each other. Oh, no, he never would tell her of the snare laid at Guy's Oak—never, not even if incensed with his father! An instinct told him that that offence could never be forgiven, and that, henceforth, Lucretia's was a destiny bound up in his own. He thought, too, of Dalibard's warning and threat. But, with fear itself, came a strange excitement of pleasure—to grapple, if necessary, he a mere child, with such a man!—his heart swelled at the thonght. So, at last he fell asleep, and dreamed that he saw his mother's trunkless face dripping gore, and frowning on him—dreamed that he heard her say: "Goest thou to the scene of my execution only to fawn upon my murderer?" Then a night-mare of horrors, of scaffolds, and executioners, and grinning mobs, and agonized faces, came on him—dark, confused and indistinct. And he woke, with his hair standing on end, and heard below, in the rising sun, the merry song of the poor canary—trill-lill-lill, trill-trill-lill-lill-la? Did he feel glad that his cruel hand had been stayed.

EPILOGUE TO PART THE FIRST.

It is a year since the November day on which Lucretia Clavering quitted the roof of Mr. Fielden. And first we must recall the eye of the reader to the old-fashioned terrace at Laughton; the jutting porch, the quaint balustrades, the broad, dark, changeless cedars on the lawn beyond. The day is calm, clear and mild, for November in the country

is often a gentle month. On that terrace walked Charles Vernon, now known by his new name of St. John. Is it the change of name that has so changed the person? Can the wand of the Herald's Office have filled up the hollows of the cheek, and replaced by elastic vigor the listless languor of the tread? No; there is another and a better cause for that heathful change. Mr. Vernon St. John is not alone—a fair companion leans on his arm. See, she pauses to press closer to his side, gaze on his face, and whisper, "We did well to have hope and faith!"

The husband's faith had not been so unshaken as his Mary's, and a slight blush passed over his cheek as he thought of his concession to Sir Miles's wishes, and his overtures to Lucretia Clavering. Still that fault had been fairly acknowledged to his wife, and she felt, the moment she had spoken, that she had committed an indiscretion; nevertheless, with an arch touch of womanly malice, she added softly,—

"And Miss Clavering, you persist in saying, was not really handsome?"

"My love," replied the husband, gravely, "you would oblige me by not recalling the very painful recollections connected with that name. Let it never be mentioned in this house."

Lady Mary bowed her graceful head in submission—she understood Charles's feelings. For though he had not shown her Sir Miles's letter and its enclosure, he had communicated enough to account for the unexpected heritage, and to lessen his wife's compassion for the disappointed heiress. Nevertheless, she comprehended that her husband felt an uneasy twinge at the idea that he was compelled to act hardly to the one whose hopes he had supplanted. Lucretia's banishment from Laughton was a just humiliation, but it humbled a generous heart to inflict the sentence. Thus, on all accounts, the remembrance of Lucretia was painful and unwelcome to the successor of Sir Miles. There was a silence—Lady Mary pressed her husband's hand.

"It is strange, said he, giving vent to his thoughts at that tender sign of sympathy in his feeling—"strange that, after all, she did not marry Mainwaring, but fixed her choice on that supple Frenchman. But she has settled abroad now, perhaps for life—a great relief to my mind. Yes, let us never recur to her."

"Fortunately," said Lady Mary, with some hesitation, "she does not seem to have created much interest here. The poor seldom name her to me, and our neighbors only with surprise at her marriage. In another year she will be forgotten!"

Mr. St. John sighed. Perhaps he felt how much more easily he had been forgotten, were he the banished one, Lucretia the possessor! His light nature, however, soon escaped from all thoughts and sources of annoyance, and he listened with complacent attention to Lady Mary's gentle plans for the poor, and the children's school, and the cottages that ought to be repaired, and the laborers that ought to be employed. For, though it may seem singular, Vernon St. John, insensibly influenced by his wife's meek superiority, and corrected by her pure companionship, had begun to feel the charm of innocent occupations;—more, perhaps, than if he had been accustomed to the larger and loftier excitements of life, and missed that stir of intellect which is the element of those who have warred in the democracy of letters, or contended for the leadership of states. He had begun already to think that the country was no such exile after all. Naturally benevolent, he had taught himself to share the occupations his Mary had already found in the busy 'luxury of doing good,' and to conceive that brotherhood of charity which usually unites the lord of the village with its poor.

"I think, what with hunting once a week,—(I will not venture more till my pain in the side is quite gone),—and with the help of some old friends at Christmas, we can get through the winter very well, Mary."

"Ah, those old friends! I dread them more than the hunting!"

"But we'll have your grave father, and your dear, precise, excellent mother, to keep us in order. And if I sit more than half an hour after dinner, the old butler shall pull me out by the ears. Mary, what do yon say to thinning the grove yonder? We shall get a better view of the landscape beyond. No, hang it! dear old Sir Miles loved his trees better than the prospect—I won't lop a bough. But that avenue we are planting will be certainly a noble improvement——"

"Fifty years hence, Charles!"

"It is our duty to think of posterity," answered the *ci-devant* spendthrift, with a gravity that was actually pompous. "But hark? is that two o'clock? Three, by Jove! How time flies! and my new bullocks that I was to see at two! Come down to the farm, that's my own Mary. Ah, your fine ladies are not such bad housewives after all!"

"And your fine gentlemen——

"Capital farmers! I had no idea till last week that a prize ox was so interesting an animal. One lives to learn. Put me in mind, by-the-bye, to write to Coke about his sheep."

"This way, dear Charles; we can go round by the village, and see poor Ponto and Dash."

The tears rushed to Mr. St. John's eyes. "If poor Sir Miles could have known you!" he said, with a sigh; and, though the gardeners were at work on the lawn, he bowed his head, and kissed the blushing cheek of his wife as heartly as if he had been really a farmer.

From the terrace at Laughton, turn to the humbler abode of our old friend the Vicar—the same day, the same hour. Here also the scene is without doors—we are in the garden of the vicarage; the children are playing at hide and seek amongst the espaliers, which screen the winding gravel walks from the esculents more dear to Ceres than to Flora. The Vicar is seated in his little parlor, from which a glazed door admits into the garden. The door is now open, and the good man has paused from his work (he had just discovered a new emendation in the first chorus of the *Medea*), to look out at the rosy faces that gleam to and fro across the scene. His wife, with a basket in her hand, is standing without the door, but a little aside, not to obstruct the view.

"It does one's heart good to see them!" said the Vicar; "little dears!"

"Yes, they ought to be dear at this time of the year," observed Mrs. Fielden, who was absorbed in the contents of the basket.

"And so fresh!"

"Fresh, indeed!—how different from London! In London they were not fit to be seen; as old as—I am sure I can't guess how old they were. But you see here they are new laid every morning!"

"My dear!" said Mr. Fielden, opening his eyes—"new laid every morning!"

"Two dozen and four."

"Two dozen and four!—What on earth are you talking about, Mrs. Fielden?"

"Why the eggs to be sure, my love!"

"Oh!" said the Vicar, "two dozen and four!—you alarmed me a little; 'tis of no consequence—only my foolish mistake. Always prudent and saving, my dear Sarah; just as if poor Sir Miles had not left us that munificent fortune, I may call it."

"It will not go very far when we have our young ones to settle. And—David is very extravagant already: he has torn such a hole in his jacket!"

At this moment, up the gravel walk, two young persons came in sight. The children darted across them, whooping and laughing, and vanished in the further recess of the garden.

"All is for the best—blind mortals that we are!—all is for the best!" said the Vicar, musingly, as his eyes rested upon the approaching pair.

"Certainly, my love; you are always right, and it is wicked to grumble. *Still*, if you saw what a hole it was—past patching, I fear!"

"Look round!" said Mr. Fielden, benevolently. "How we grieved for them both; how wroth we were with William—how sad for Susan! And now see them—they will be the better man and wife for their trial!"

"Has Susan then consented? I was almost afraid she never would consent. How often have I been almost angry with her, poor lamb! when I have heard her accuse herself of causing her sister's unhappiness, and declare with sobs that she felt it a crime to think of William Mainwaring as a husband."

"I trust I have reasoned her out of a morbid sensibility, which, while it could not have rendered Lucretia the happier, must have ensured the wretchedness of herself and William. But if Lucretia had not married, and so for ever closed the door on William's repentance (that is, supposing he *did* repent), I believe poor Susan would rather have died of a broken heart, than have given her hand to Mainwaring."

"It was an odd marriage of that proud young lady's, after all," said Mrs. Fielden; "so much older than her—a foreigner, too!"

"But he is a very pleasant man, and they had known each other so long. I did not

however, quite like a sort of cunning he showed, when I come to reflect on it, in bringing Lucretia back to the house; it looks as if he had laid a trap for her from the first."

"Ten thousand pounds!—a great catch for a foreigner!" observed Mrs. Fielden, with the shrewd instinct of her sex; and then she added, in the spirit of a prudent sympathy equally characteristic: "But I think you say Mr. Parchmount persuaded her to allow half to be settled on herself. That will be a hold on him."

"A bad hold, if that be all, Sarah. There is a better—he is a learned man, and a scholar. Scholars are naturally domestic, and make good husbands."

"But you know he must be a papist!" said Mrs. Fielden.

"Umph!" muttered the Vicar, irresolutely.

While the worthy couple were thus conversing, Susan and her lover, not having finished their conference, had turned back through the winding walk.

"Indeed," said William, drawing her arm closer to his side, "these scruples—these fears—are cruel to me as well as to yourself. If you were no longer existing, I could be nothing to your sister. Nay, even were she not married, you must know enough of her pride to be assured that I can retain no place in her affections. What has chanced was not our crime. Perhaps Heaven designed to save, not only us, but herself, from the certain misery of nuptials so inauspicious!"

"If she would but answer one of my letters!" sighed Susan; "or if I could but know that she were happy and contented!"

"Your letters must have miscarried—you are not sure even of her address. Rely upon it she is happy. Do you think that she would, a second time 'have stooped beneath her'"—Mainwaring's lip writhed as he repeated that phrase—"if her feelings had not been involved? I would not wrong your sister—I shall ever feel gratitude for the past, and remorse for my own shameful weakness—still I must think that the nature of her attachment to me was more ardent than lasting."

"Ah, William! how can you know her heart?"

"By comparing it with yours. Oh, there, indeed, I may anchor my faith! Susan, we were formed for each other! Our natures are alike—save that yours, despite its surpassing sweetness, has greater strength in its simple candor. You will be my guide to good. Without you I should have no aim in life—no courage to front the contests of this world. Ah, this hand trembles still!"

"William, William, I cannot repress a foreboding—a superstition! At night, I am haunted with that pale face, as I saw it last,—pale with suppressed despair. Oh, if ever Lucretia could have need of us—need of our services, our affections—if we could but repair the grief we have caused her!"

Susan's head sank on her lover's shoulder. She had said "need of *us*"—need of *our* services." In those monosyllables the union was pledged—the identity of their lots in the dark urn was implied.

From this scene turn again—the slide shifts in the lantern—we are at Paris. In the ante-chamber at the Tuileries, a crowd of expectant courtiers and adventurers gaze upon a figure who passes with modest and downcast eyes through the throng; he has just left the closet of the First Consul.

"*Par Dieu!*" said B——, "power, like misery, makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows. I should like to hear what the First Consul can have to say to Olivier Dalibard."

Fouché, who at that period was scheming for the return to his old dignities as minister of police, smiled slightly, and answered, "In a time when the air is filled with daggers, one who was familiar with Robespierre has his uses. Oliver Dalibard is a remarkable man. He is one of those children of the Revolution, whom the great mother is bound to save."

"By betraying his brethren?" said B——, drily.

"I do not allow the inference. The simple fact is that Dalibard has spent many years in England—he has married an Englishwoman of birth and connections—he knows well the English language and English people—and just now, when the First Consul is so anxious to *approfondir* the popular feelings of that strange nation, with whose government he is compelled to go to war, he may naturally have much to say to so acute an observer as Olivier Dalibard."

"Um!" said B——; "with such patronage,

Robespierre's friend should hold his head somewhat higher!"

Meanwhile, Olivier Dalibard, crossing the gardens of the palace, took his way to the Faubourg St. Germain. There was no change in the aspect of this man: the same meditative tranquillity characterized his downward eyes and bended brow: the same precise simplicity of dress which had pleased the prim taste of Robespierre, gave decorum to his slender stooping form. No expression more cheerful, no footstep more elastic, bespoke the exile's return to his native land, or the sanguine expectations of Intellect restored to a career. Yet, to all appearance, the prospects of Dalibard were bright and promising.

The First Consul was at that stage of his greatness, when he sought to employ in his service all such talent as the Revolution had made manifest—provided only, that it was not stained with notorious bloodshed, or too strongly associated with the Jacobin clubs. His quick eye seemed to have discovered already the abilities of Dalibard, and to have appreciated the sagacity and knowledge of men which had enabled this subtle person to obtain the friendship of Robespierre, without sharing in his crimes. He had been frequently closeted with Buonaparte: he was in the declared favor of Fouché, who, though not at that period at the head of the Police, was too necessary amidst the dangers of the time, deepened as they were by the rumors of some terrible and profound conspiracy, to be laid aside, as the First Consul had at one moment designed. One man alone, of those high in the State, appeared to distrust Olivier Dalibard—the celebrated Cambacérès. But with his aid the Provençal could dispense. What was the secret of Dalibard's power? was it in truth owing solely to his native talent, and his acquired experience, especially of England?—was it by honorable means that he had won the ear of the first Consul? We may be sure of the contrary: for it is a striking attribute of men, once thoroughly tainted by the indulgence of vicious schemes and stratagems, that they become wholly blinded to those plain paths of ambition, which common sense makes manifest to ordinary ability. If we regard narrowly the lives of great criminals, we are often very much startled by the extraordinary acuteness—the profound calculation—the patient meditative energy which they have employed upon the conception and execution of a crime.

We feel inclined to think that such intellectual power would have commanded great distinction, worthily used and guided: but we never find that these great criminals seem to have been sensible of the opportunities to real eminence which they have thrown away. Often we observe that there have been before them vistas into worldly greatness, which by no uncommon prudence and exertion would have conducted honest men half as clever to fame and power: but, with a strange obliquity of vision, they appear to have looked from these broad clear avenues, into some dark, tangled defile, in which, by the subtlest ingenuity, and through the most besetting perils, they might attain at last to the success of a fraud, or the enjoyment of a vice. In crime once indulged, there is a wonderful fascination—and the fascination is, not rarely, great in proportion to the intellect of the criminal. There is always hope of reform for a dull uneducated, stolid man, led by accident or temptation into guilt: but where a man of great ability, and highly educated, besots himself in the intoxication of dark and terrible excitements, takes impure delight in tortuous and slimy ways, the good angel abandons him for ever.

Olivier Dalibard walked musingly on—gained a house in one of the most desolate quarters of the abandoned Faubourg, mounted the spacious stairs, and rang at the door of an attic next the roof. After some moments, the door was slowly and cautiously opened, and two small, fierce eyes, peering through a mass of black tangled curls, gleamed through the aperture. The gaze seemed satisfactory.

"Enter, friend!" said the inmate, with a sort of stump accent grunt; and as Dalibard obeyed, the man relocked and barred the door.

The room was bare to beggary,—the ceiling, low and sloping, was blackened with smoke. A wretched bed, two chairs, a table, a strong chest, a small cracked looking-glass, completed the inventory. The dress of the occupier was not in keeping with the chamber:—true that it was not such as was worn by the wealthier classes, but it betokened no sign of poverty. A blue coat with high collar, and

half of military fashion, was buttoned tight over a chest of vast girth; the nether garments were of leather, scrupulously clean, and solid, heavy riding boots came half way up the thigh. A more sturdy, stalwart, strong-built knave, never excited the admiration which physical power always has a right to command: And Dalibard gazed on him with envy. The pale scholar absolutely sighed as he thought—what an auxiliary to his own scheming mind would have been so tough a frame!

But even less in form than face did the man of thews and sinews contrast the man of wile and craft. Opposite that high forehead, with its massive development of organs, scowled the low front of one to whom thought was unfamiliar—protuberant, indeed, over the shaggy brows, where phrenologists place the seats of practical perception—strongly marked in some of the brutes, as in the dog—but almost literally void of those higher organs, by which we reason, and imagine, and construct. But in rich atonement for such deficiency, all the animal reigned triumphant in the immense mass and width of the skull behind. And as the hair, long before, curled in close rings to the nape of the bull-like neck, you saw before you one of those useful instruments to ambition and fraud, which recoil at no danger, comprehend no crime, are not without certain good qualities, under virtuous guidance,—for they have the fidelity, the obedience, the stubborn courage of the animal; but which under evil control, turn those very qualities to unsparing evil—bull-dogs to rend the foe, as bull-dogs to defend the master.

For some moments the two men gazed silently at each other. At length, Dalibard said, with an air of calm superiority——

"My friend, it is time that I should be presented to the chiefs of your party!"

"Chiefs, *par tous les diables!*" growled the other; "we *Chouans* are all chiefs, when it comes to blows. You have seen my credentials; you know that I am a man to be trusted; what more do you need?"

"For myself nothing; but my friends are more scrupulous. I have sounded, as I promised, the heads of the old Jacobin party—and they are favorable. This upstart soldier, who has suddenly seized in his iron grasp all the fruits of the Revolution, is as hateful to them as to you. But, *que voulez vous, mon cher*—men are men! It is one thing to destroy Buonaparte; it is another thing to restore the Bourbons. How can the Jacobin chiefs depend on your assurance, or my own, that the Bourbons will forget the old offences, and reward the new service? You apprise me, so do your credentials, that a Prince of the blood is engaged in this enterprise, that he will appear at the proper season. Put me in direct communication with this representative of the Bourbons, and I promise in return, if his assurances are satisfactory, that you shall have an *émeute* to be felt from Paris to Marseilles. If you can not do this, I am useless; and I withdraw——"

"Withdraw! *Garde à vous—Monsieur le Savant!* No man withdraws alive from a conspiracy like ours."

We have said before that Olivier Dalibard was not physically brave; and the look of the *Chouan*, as those words were said, would have frozen the blood of many a bolder man. But the habitual hypocrisy of Dalibard enabled him to disguise his fear, and he replied drily:

"*Monsieur le Chouan*,—it is not by threats that you will gain adherents to a desperate cause, which, on the contrary, requires mild words and flattering inducements. If you commit a violence—a murder—*mon cher*—Paris is not Bretagne; we have a police; you will be discovered."

"Ha, ha!—what then?—do you think I fear the guillotine?"

"For yourself—no; but for your leaders—yes! If you are dicovered, and arrested for crime, do you fancy that the Police will not recognize the right arm of the terrible George Cadoudal?—that they will not guess that Cadoudal is at Paris?—that Cadoudal will not accompany you to the guillotine?"

The *Chouan's* face fell. Olivier watched him, and pursued his advantage.

"I asked you to introduce to me this shadow of a prince, under which you would march to a counter-revolution. But I will be more easily contented. Present me to George Cadoudal, the hero of Morbihan; he is a man in whom I can trust, and with whom I can deal. What!—you hesitate?—How do you suppose enterprises of this nature can be carried on? If, from fear and distrust of each other, the man you would employ cannot

meet the chief who directs him, there will be delay—confusion—panic,—and you will all perish by the executioner. And for me, Pierre Guillot, consider my position: I am in some favor with the First Consul—I have a station of respectability—a career lies before me. Can you think that I will hazard these, with my head to boot, like a rash child? Do you suppose that, in entering into this terrible contests, I would consent to treat only with subordinates? Do not deceive yourself. Again, I say, tell your employers that they must confer with me directly, or *je m'en lave les mains.*"

"I will repeat what you say," answered Guillot, sullenly. "Is this all?"

"All for the present," said Dalibard, slowly drawing on his gloves, and retreating towards the door. The *Chouan* watched him with a suspicious and sinister eye; and as the Provençal's hand was on the latch, he laid his own rough grasp on Dalibard's shoulder—

"I know not how it is, Monsieur Dalibard, but I mistrust you."

"Distrust is natural and prudent to all who conspire," replied the scholar, quietly. "I do not ask you to confide in me—your employers bade you seek me—I have mentioned my conditions—let them decide."

"You carry it off well, Monsieur Dalibard. And I am under a solemn oath, which poor George made me take knowing me to be a hot-headed, honest fellow—*mauvaise tête*, if you will—that I will keep my hand off pistol and knife upon mere suspicion—that nothing less than his word or than clear and positive proof of treachery shall put me out of good humor and into warm blood. But bear this with you, Monsieur Dalibard, if I once discover that you use our secrets to betray them,—should George see you, and one hair of his head come to injury through *your* hands, I will wring your neck as a housewife wrings a pullet's."

"I don't doubt your strength or your ferocity, Pierre Guillot; but my neck will be safe; you have enough to do to take care of your own—*au revoir.*"

With a tone and look of calm and fearless irony, the scholar thus spoke and left the room; but when he was on the stairs, he paused, and caught at the balustrade—the sickness as of terror at some danger past, or to be, came over him; and this contrast between the self-command, or simulation which belongs to moral courage, and the feebleness of natural and constitutional cowardice, would have been sublime if shown in a noble cause. In one so corrupt, it but betrayed a nature doubly formidable; for treachery and murder hatch their brood amidst the folds of a hypocrite's cowardice.

While thus the interview between Dalibard and the conspirator,—we must bestow a glance upon the Provençal's home.

In an apartment in one of the principal streets, between the Boulevards and the Rue St. Honoré, a boy and a woman sate side by side, conversing in whispers. The boy was Gabriel Varney, the woman Lucretia Dalibard. The apartment was furnished in the then modern taste which affected classical forms; and though not without a certain elegance, had something meagre and comfortless in its splendid tripods and thin-legged chairs. There was in the apartment that air which bespeaks the struggle for appearances—that struggle familiar with those of limited income, and vain aspirings, who want the taste which smoothes all inequalities, and gives a smile to home—that taste which affection seems to prompt, if not to create—which show itself in a thousand nameless, costless trifles, each a grace. No sign was there of the household cares or industry of women. No flowers, no music, no embroidery-frame, no work-table. Lucretia had none of the sweet feminine habits which betray so lovelily the whereabout of women. All was formal and precise, like rooms which we enter and leave—not those in in which we settle and dwell.

Lucretia herself is changed, her air is more assured, her complexion more pale, the evil character of her mouth more firm and pronounced.

Gabriel, still a mere boy in years, has a premature look of man. The down shades his lips. His dress, though showy and theatrical, is no longer that of boyhood. His rounded cheek has grown thin, as with the care and thought which beset the anxious step of youth on entering into life.

Both, as before remarked, spoke in whispers;—both from time to time glanced fearfully at the door; both felt that they belonged to a hearth round which smile not the jocund

graces of trust and love, and the heart's open ease.

"But," said Gabriel—"but if you would be safe, my father must have no secrets hid from you."

"I do not know that he has. He speaks to me frankly of his hopes—of the share he has in the discovery of the plot against the First Consul—of his interviews with Pierre Guillot, the Breton."

"Ah, because *there* your courage supports him, and your acuteness assists his own. Such secrets belong to his public life—his political schemes—with those he will trust you. It is his private life—his private projects you must know,"

"But what does he conceal from me? Apart from polilics, his whole mind seems bent on the very natural object of securing the intimacy with his rich cousin, Monsieur Bellanger, from whom he has a right to expect so large an inheritance."

"Bellanger is rich, but he is not much older than my father."

"He has bad health."

"No," said Gabriel, with a downcast eye and a strange smile—"he has not bad health, but he may not be long lived."

"How do you mean?" asked Lucretia, sinking her voice into a still lower whisper, while a shudder, she scarce knew why, passed over her frame.

"What does my father do," resumed Gabriel, "in that room at the top of the house? Does he tell you *that* secret?"

"He makes experiments in chemistry. You know that that was always his favorite study. You smile again! Gabriel, do not smile so; it appals me. Do you think there is some mystery in that chamber?"

"It matters not what we think, *belle mère*—it matters much what we know. If I were you, I *would* know what is in that chamber. I repeat, to be safe, you must have all his secrets or none. Hush, that is his step!"

The door handle turned noiselessly, and Olivier entered. His look fell on his son's face, which betrayed only apparent surprise at his unexpected return. He then glanced at Lucretia's, which was, as usual, cold and impenetrable.

"Gabriel," said Dalibard, gently, "I have come in for you. I have promised to take you to spend the day at Monsieur Bellanger's; you are a great favorite with Madame. Come, my boy. I shall be back soon, Lucretia. I shall but drop in to leave Gabriel at my cousin's."

Gabriel rose cheerfully, as if only alive to the expectation of the bon-bons and compliments he received habitually from Madame Bellanger.

"And you can take your drawing implements with you," continued Dalibard. "This good Monsieur Bellanger has given you permission to copy his Poussin."

"His Poussin! Ah, *that* is placed in his bed-room,* is it not?"

"Yes," answered Dalibard, briefly.

Gabriel lifted his sharp bright eyes to his father's face. Dalibard turned away.

"Come!" he said, with some impatience; and the boy took up his hat.

In another minute, Lucretia was alone.

Alone, in an English home, is a word implying no dreary solitude to an accomplished woman; but alone in that foreign land—alone in those half-furnished, desolate apartments—few books, no musical instruments, no companions during the day to drop in;—*that* loneliness was wearing. And that mind so morbidly active! In the old Scottish legend, the Spirit that serves the wizard must be kept constantly employed; suspend its work for a moment, and it rends the enchanter. It is so with minds that crave for excitement, and live without relief of heart and affection, on the hard tasks of the intellect.

Lucretia mused over Gabriel's words and warning: "To be safe, you must know all his secrets or none." What was the secret which Dalibard had not communicated to her?

She rose, stole up the cold, cheerless stairs, and ascended to the attic which Dalibard had lately hired. It was locked; and she observed that the lock was small—so small, that the key might be worn in a ring. She descended and entered her husband's usual cabinet, which adjoined the sitting-room. All the books which the house contained were there; a few works on metaphysics—Spinosa in especial—the great Italian histories, some volumes of statistics, many on physical and

* "It is scarcely necessary to observe that bed-chambers in Paris, when forming part of the suite of reception rooms, are often decorated no less elaborately than the other apartments.

mechanical philosophy, and one or two works of biography and memoirs:—No light literature, that grace and flower of human culture —that best philosophy of all, humanizing us with gentle art, making us wise through the humors, elevated through the passions, tender in the affections of our kind! She took out one of the volumes that seemed less arid than the rest, for she was weary of her own thoughts, and began to read. To her surprise, the first passage she opened was singularly interesting, though the title was nothing more seductive than the "Life of a Physician of Padua, in the Sixteenth Century." It related to that singular epoch of terror in Italy, when some mysterious disease, varying in a thousand symptoms, baffled all remedy, and long defied all conjecture—a disease attacking chiefly the heads of families, father and husband—rarely women. In one city seven hundred husbands perished, but not one wife!

The disease was poison. The hero of the memoir was one of the earlier discoverers of the true cause of this household epidemic. He had been a chief authority in a commission of inquiry. Startling were the details given in the work; the anecdotes, the histories, the astonishing craft brought daily to bear on the victim, the wondrous perfidy of the subtle means, the variation of the certain murder—here swift as epilepsy—there slow and wasting as long decline:—the lecture was absorbing; and absorbed in the book Lucretia still was, when she heard Dalibard's voice behind; he was looking over her shoulder.

"A strange selection for so fair a student! *Enfant*, play not with such weapons!"

"But is this all true?"

"True, though scarce a fragment of the truth. The physician was a sorry chemist, and a worse philosopher. He blundered in his analysis of the means; and, if I remember rightly, he whines like a priest at the motives; for see you not what was really the cause of this spreading pestilence. It was the Saturnalia of the Weak—a burst of mocking licence against the Strong: it was more—it was the innate force of the individual waging war against the many."

"I do not understand you."

"No! In that age, husbands were, indeed, lords of the household: they married mere children for their lands; they neglected and betrayed them; they were inexorable if the wife committed the faults set before her example. Suddenly the wife found herself armed against her tyrant. His life was in her hands. So the weak had no mercy on the strong! But man, too, was then, even more than now, a lonely wrestler in a crowded arena. Brute force alone gave him distinction in courts; wealth alone brought him justice in the halls, or gave him safety in his home. Suddenly, the frail, puny man saw that he could reach the mortal part of his giant foe. The noiseless sling was in his hand—it smote Goliath from afar. Suddenly, the poor man, ground to the dust, spat upon by contempt, saw through the crowd of richer kinsmen, who shunned and bade him rot—saw those whose death made him heir to lordship, and gold, and palaces, and power, and esteem! As a worm through a wardrobe, that man ate through velvet and ermine, and gnawed out the hearts that beat in his way. No! A great intellect can comprehend these criminals, and account for the crime. It is a mighty thing to feel in one's self that one is an army—more than an army! What thousands and millions of men, with trumpet and banner, and under the sanction of glory, strive to do—*destroy a foe*, that, with little more than an effort of the will—with a drop, a grain, for all his arsenal—one man can do!"

There was a horrible enthusiasm about this reasoning devil as he spoke thus; his crest rose, his breast expanded. That animation which a noble thought gives to generous hearts, kindled in the face of the apologist for the darkest and basest of human crimes. Lucretia suddered; but her gloomy imagination was spelled; there was an interest mingled with her terror.

"Hush! you appal me," she said, at last, timidly. "But, happily, this fearful art exists no more to tempt and destroy?"

"As a mere philosophical discovery, it might be amusing to a chemist to learn exactly what were the compounds of those ancient poisons," said Dalibard, not directly answering the implied question. "Portions of the art are indeed lost, unless, as I suspect, there is much credulous exaggeration in the accounts transmitted to us. To kill by a flower, a pair of gloves, a soap ball—kill by means which elude all possible suspicion—is it

creditable? What say you? An amusing research, indeed, if one had leisure! But enough of this now; it grows late. We dine with the Monsieur de ——. He wishes to let his hotel. Why, Lucretia, if we knew a little of this old art, *Par Dieu!* we could soon hire the hotel! Well, well, perhaps we may survive my cousin, Jean Bellanger!"

Three days afterwards, Lucretia stood by her husband's side in the secret chamber. From the hour when she left it, a change was perceptible in her countenance, which gradually removed from it the character of youth. Paler the cheek could scarce become, nor more cold the discontented, restless eye. But it was as if some great care had settled on her brow, and contracted yet more the stern outline of the lips. Gabriel noted the alteration; but he did not attempt to win her confidence. He was occupied rather in considering, first, if it were well for him to sound deeper into the mystery he suspected; and, secondly, to what extent, and on what terms it became his interest to aid the designs in which, by Dalibard's hints and kindly treatment, he foresaw that he he was meant to participate.

A word now on the rich kinsman of the Dalibards: Jean Bellanger had been one of those prudent republicans who had put the Revolution to profit. By birth a Marseillais,—he had settled in Paris, as an *épicier*, about the year 1785, and had distinguished himself by the adaptability and finesse which become those who fish in such troubled waters. He had sided with Mirabeau, next with Vergniaud, and the Girondins. These he forsook in time for Danton, whose facile corruptibility made him a seductive patron. He was a large purchaser in the sale of the emigrant property; he obtained a contract for the supply of the army in the Netherlands; he abandoned Danton as he had abandoned the Girondins, but without taking any active part in the after proceedings of the Jacobins. His next connection was with Tallien and Barras, and he enriched himself yet more under the Directory than he had done in the earlier stages of the Revolution.

Under cover of an appearance of *bonhomie* and good humor, a frank laugh and open countenance, Jean Bellanger had always retained general popularity and good will; and was one of those whom the policy of the First Consul led him to conciliate. He had long since retired from the more vulgar departments of trade, but continued to flourish as an army contractor. He had a large hotel and a splendid establishment. He was one of the great capitalists of Paris. The relationship between Dalibard and Bellanger was not very close, it was that of cousins twice removed; and during Dalibard's previous residence at Paris, each embracing different parties, and each eager in his career, the blood-tie between them had not been much thought of, though they were good friends, and each respected the other for the discretion with which he had kept aloof from the more sanguinary excesses of the time. As Bellanger was not many years older than Dalibard, as the former had but just married in the year 1791, and had naturally before him the prospect of a family—as his fortunes at that time, though rising, were unconfirmed, and as some nearer relations stood between them, in the shape of two promising sturdy nephews, Dalibard had not then calculated on any inheritence from his cousin. On his return, circumstances were widely altered—Bellanger had been married some years, and no issue had blessed his nuptials. His nephews, draughted into the conscription, had perished in Egypt. Dalibard apparently became his nearest relative.

To avarice or to worldly ambition, there was, undoubtedly, something very dazzling in the prospect thus opened to the eyes of Olivier Dalibard. The Contractor's splendid mode of living, vying with that of the *fermier-général* of old, the colossal masses of capital, by which he backed and supported speculations, that varied with an ingenuity rendered practical and profound by experience, inflamed into fever the morbid restlesness of fancy and intellect which characterized the evil scholar. For that restlessness seemed to supply to his nature, vices not constitutional to it. Dalibard had not the avarice that belongs either to a miser or a spendthrift. In his youth, his books and the simple desires of an abstract student sufficed to his wants, and a habit of method and order, a mechanical calculation which accompanied all his acts, from the least to the greatest—preserved him, even when most poor, from neediness and want. Nor was he by nature vain and osten-

tatious—those infirmities accompany a larger and more luxuriant nature. His philosophy rather despised, than inclined to show. Yet since to plot and to scheme made his sole amusement, his absorbing excitement,—so a man wrapped in himself, and with no generous ends in view, has little to plot or to scheme for, but objects of worldly aggrandisement. In this, Dalibard resembled one whom the intoxication of gambling has mastered, who neither wants, nor greatly prizes, the stake, but who has grown wedded to the venture for it. In was a madness like that of a certain rich nobleman in our own country, who, with more money than he could spend, and with a skill, in all games where skill enters, that would have secured him success of itself,—having learned the art of cheating, could not resist its indulgence. No hazard, no warning, could restrain him—cheat he must—the propensity became iron-strong as a Greek destiny.

That the possible chance of an inheritance so magnificent should dazzle Lucretia and Gabriel, was yet more natural; for in them, it appealed to more direct and eloquent, though not more powerful, propensities. Gabriel had every vice which the greed of gain most irritates and excites. Intense covetousness lay at the core of his heart; he had the sensual temperament which yearns for every enjoyment, and takes pleasure in every pomp and show of life. Lucretia, with a hardness of mind that disdained luxury; and a certain grandeur, (if such a word may be applied to one so perverted), that was incompatible with the sordid infirmities of the miser, had a determined and insatiable ambition to which gold was a necessary instrument. Wedded to one she loved, like Mainwaring, the ambition. as we have said in a former chapter, could have lived in another, and become devoted to intellectual efforts, in the nobler desire for power based on fame and genius. But now she had the gloomy cravings of one fallen, and the uneasy desire to restore herself to a lost position—she fed as an ailment upon scorn to bitterness, of all beings and all things around her. She was gnawned by that false fever which riots in those who seek by outward seemings and distinctions to console themselves for the want of their own self-esteem; or who, despising the world with which they are brought into contact, sigh for those worldly advantages, which alone justify to the world itself their contempt.

To these diseased infirmities of vanity or pride, whether exhibited in Gabriel or Lucretia, Dalibard administered without apparent effort, not only by his conversation, but his habits of life. He mixed with those much wealthier than himself, but not better born—those who, in the hot and fierce ferment of that new society, were rising fast into new aristocracy,—fortunate soldiers, daring speculators, plunderers of many an argosy that had been wrecked in the Great Storm. Every one about them was actuated by the keen desire "to make a fortune"—the desire was contagious. They were not absolutely poor in the proper sense of the word poverty, with Dalibard's annuity and the interest of Lucretia's fortune, but they were poor compared to those with whom they associated—poor enough for discontent. Thus, the image of the mighty wealth from which, perhaps, but a single life divided them, became horribly haunting. To Gabriel's sensual vision, the image presented itself in the shape of unlimited pleasure and prodigal riot; to Lucretia, it wore the solemn majesty of power: to Dalibard himself it was but the Eureka of a calculation—the palpable reward of wile, and scheme, and dexterous combinations. The devil had temptations suited to each. Meanwhile, the Dalibards were more and more with the Bellangers. Olivier glided in to talk of the chances and changes of the state and the market. Lucretia sate for hours, listening mutely to the Contractor's boasts of past frauds, or submitting to the martyrdom of his victorious games at tric-trac. Gabriel, a spoiled darling, copied the pictures on the walls, complimented Madame, flattered Monsieur, and fawned on both for trinkets and crowns. Like three birds of night aud omen, these three evil natures settled on the rich man's roof.

Was the rich man himself blind to the motives which budded for into such attentive affection? His penetration was too acute—his ill opinion of mankind too strong, perhaps, for such amiable self-delusions. But he took all in good part, availed himself of Dalibard's hints and suggestions as to the employment of his capital; was polite to Lucretia, and readily condemned her to be beaten at tric-trac, while he accepted with *bonhomie* Gabriel's spirited

copies of his pictures. But at times, there was a gleam of satire and malice in his round grey eyes, and an inward chuckle at the caresses and flatteries he received, which perplexed Dalibard, and humbled Lucretia. Had his wealth been wholly at his own disposal, these signs would have been inauspicious, but the new law was strict, and the bulk of Bellanger's property could not be alienated from his nearest kin. Was not Dalibard the nearest?

These hopes and speculations did not, as we have seen, absorb the restless and rank energies of Dalibard's crooked, but capacious and grasping intellect. Patiently and ingeniously he pursued his main political object—the detection of that audacious and complicated conspiracy against the First Consul, which ended in the tragic deaths of Pichegru, the Duc D'Enghien, and the erring but illustrious hero of La Vandée, George Cadoudal. In the midst of these dark plots for personal aggrandizement and political fortune, we leave, for the moment, the sombre sullen soul of Olivier Dalibard.

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Time has passed on, and Spring is over the world; the seeds, buried in the earth, burst to flower; but man's breast knoweth not the sweet division of the seasons. In winter or summer, autumn or spring alike, his thoughts sow the germs of his actions, and day after day his destiny gathers in her harvests.

The joy-bells ring clear through the groves of Laughton—an heir is born to the old name and fair lands of St. John! And, as usual, the present race welcomes merrily in, that which shall succeed and replace it—that which shall thrust the enjoyers down into the black graves, and wrest from them the pleasant goods of the world. The joy-bell of birth is a note of warning to the knell for the dead; it wakes the worms beneath the mould; the new-born, every year that it grows and flourishes, speeds the Parent to their feast. Yet who can predict that the infant shall become the heir?—who can tell that Death sits not side by side with the nurse at the cradle? Can the mother's hand measure out the woof of the Parcæ, or the father's eye detect, through the darkness of the morrow, the gleam of the fatal shears?

It is market-day, at a town in the midland districts of England. There, Trade takes its healthiest and most animated form. You see not the stunted form and hollow eye of the mechanic—poor slave of the capitalist—poor agent and victim of the arch disequalizer—Civilization. There, strides the burly form of the farmer; there, waits the ruddy hind with his flock; there, patient, sits the miller with his samples of corn; there, in the booths, gleam the humble wares which form the luxuries of cottage and farm. The thronging of men, and the clacking of whips, and the dull sound of wagon or dray, that parts the crowd as it passes, and the lowing of herds and the bleating of sheep, all are sounds of movement and bustle, yet blend with the pastoral associations of the Primitive Commerce, when the link between market and farm was visible and direct.

Towards one large house in the centre of the brisk life ebbing on, you might see stream after stream pour its way. The large doors swinging light on their hinges, the gilt letters that shine above the threshold, the windows, with their shutters outside cased in iron and studded with nails, announce that that house is the Bank of the town. Come in with that yeoman, whose broad face tells its tale, sheepish and down-eyed—he has come not to invest, but to borrow. What matters, war is breaking out anew, to bring the time of high prices, and paper money and credit. Honest yeoman, you will not be refused. He scratches his rough head, pulls a leg, as he calls it, when the clerk leans over the counter, and asks to see "Muster Mawnering hisself." The clerk points to the little office-room of the junior partner, who has brought ten thousand pounds, and a clear head, to the firm. And the yeoman's great boots creak heavily in. I told you so, honest yeoman; you come out with a smile on your brown face, and your hand, that might fell an ox, buttons up your huge breeches-pocket. You will ride home with a light heart—go and dine, and be merry.

The yeoman tramps to the Ordinary; plates clatter, tongues wag; and the borrower's full heart finds vent in a good word for that kind "Muster Mawnering." For a wonder, all join in the praise. "He's an honor to the town; he's a pride to the country—thof he's such a friend at a pinch, he's a rale mon of business!

He'll make the baunk worth a million !—and how well he spoke at the great county meeting about the war, and the laund, and them blood-thirsty Mounseers ! If their members were loike him, Muster Fox would look small ! "

The day declines; the town empties—whiskies, horses, and carts, are giving life to the roads and the lanes—and the market is deserted, and the bank is shut up, and William Mainwaring walks back to his home at the skirts of the town—not villa nor cottage—that plain English house with its cheerful face of red brick, and its solid squareness of shape—a symbol of substance in the fortunes of the owner ! Yet, as he passes, he sees through the distant trees the hall of the member for the town. He pauses a moment, and sighs unquietly. That pause and that sigh betray the germ of ambition and discontent. Why should not he who can speak so well, be member for the town, instead of that stammering squire ? But his reason has soon silenced the querulous murmur. He hastens his step—he is at home ! And there, in the neat furnished drawing-room, which looks on the garden behind, hisses the welcoming tea-urn; and the piano is open, and there is a packet of new books on the table; and, best of all, there is the glad face of the sweet English wife. The happy scene was characteristic of the time, just when the simpler and more innocent luxuries of the higher class spread, not to spoil, but refine the middle. The dress, air, mien, movements of the young couple; the unassuming, suppressed, sober elegance of the house; the flower-garden, the books, and the music, evidences of cultivated taste, not signals of display—all bespoke the gentle fusion of ranks, before rude and uneducated wealth, made in looms and lucky hits, rushed in to separate for ever the gentleman from the *parvenu*.

Spring smiles over Paris, over the spires of Nôtre Dame, and the crowded alleys of the Tuileries, over thousands and thousands eager, joyous, aspiring, reckless—the New Race of France—bound to one man's destiny, children of glory and of carnage, whose blood the wolf and the vulture scent, hungry, from afar !

The conspiracy against the life of the First Consul has been detected and defeated. Pichegru is in prison, George Cadoudal awaits his trial, the Duc D'Enghien sleeps in his bloody grave; the imperial crown is prepared for the great soldier, and the great soldier's creatures bask in the noon-day sun. Olivier Dalibard is in high and lucrative employment; his rise is ascribed to his talents—his opinions. No service connected with the detection of the conspiracy is traced or traceable by the public eye. If such exist, it is known but to those who have no desire to reveal it. The old apartments are retained; but they are no longer dreary, and comfortless, and deserted. They are gay with draperies, and or-molu, and mirrors; and Madame Dalibard has her nights of reception, and Monsieur Dalibard has already his troops of clients. In that gigantic concentration of egotism which, under Napoleon, is called The State, Dalibard has found his place. He has served to swell the power of the unit, and the cipher gains importance by its position in the sum.

Jean Bellanger is no more. He died, not suddenly, and yet of some quick disease—nervous exhaution: his schemes, they said, had worn him out. But the state of Dalibard, though prosperous, is not that of the heir to the dead millionaire. What mistake is this ? The bulk of that wealth must go to the nearest kin—so runs the law. But the will is read; and, for the first time, Olivier Dalibard learns that the dead man had a son—a son by a former marriage—the marriage undeclared, unknown, amidst the riot of the revolution; for the wife was the daughter of a *proscrit*. The son had been reared at a distance, put to school at Lyons, and unavowed to the second wife, who had brought an ample dower, and whom that discovery might have deterred from the altar. Unacknowledged through life—in death, at least, the son's right's are proclaimed: and Olivier Dalibard feels that Jean Bellanger has died in vain ! For days has the pale Provençal been closeted with lawyers; but there is no hope in litigation. The proofs of the marriage, the birth, the identity, come out clear and clearer; and the beardless schoolboy at Lyons reaps all the profit of those nameless schemes and that mysterious death. Oliver Dalibard desires the friendship—the intimacy of the heir. But the heir is consigned to the guardianship of a merchant at Lyons, near of kin to his mother—and the guardian responded but coldly to Olivier's letters. Suddenly the defeated aspirant seems

reconciled to his loss. The widow Bellanger has her own separate fortune; and it is large, beyond expectation. In addition to the wealth she brought the deceased, his affection had led him to invest vast sums in her name. The widow, then, is rich—rich as the heir himself. She is still fair. Poor woman, she needs consolation! But, meanwhile, the nights of Olivier Dalibard are disturbed and broken. His eye, in the day-time, is haggard and anxious; he is seldom seen on foot in the streets. Fear is his companion by day, and sits at night on his pillow. The *Chouan*, Pierre Guillot, who looked to George Cadoudnl as a god, knows that George Cadoudal has been betrayed, and suspects Oliver Dalibard; and the *Chouan* has an arm of iron and a heart steeled against all mercy. Oh, how the pale scholar thirsted for that *Chouan's* blood! With what relentless pertinacity, with what ingenious research he had set all the hounds of the police upon the track of that single man! How notably he had failed! An avenger lived; and Olivier Dalibard started at his own shadow on the wall. But he did not the less continue to plot and to intrigue—nay, such occupation became more necessary, as an escape from himself.

And, in the meanwhile, Olivier Dalibard sought to take courage from the recollection that the *Chouan* had taken an oath (and he knew that oaths are held sacred with the Bretons) that he would keep his hand from his knife, unless he had clear evidence of treachery;—such evidence existed, but only in Dalibard's desk, or the archives of Fouché. Tush, he was safe! And so, when from dreams of fear, he started at the depth of night, so his bolder wife would whisper to him with firm uncaressing lips. Olivier Dalibard, thou fearest the living, dost thou never fear the dead? Thy dreams are haunted with a spectre. Why takes it not the accusing shape of thy mouldering kinsman? Dalibard would have answered, for he was a philosopher in his cowardice, "*Il n'y a qui les morts, qui ne reviennent pas.*"

It is the notable convenience of us narrators to represent, by what is called *soliloquy*, the thoughts—the interior of the personages we describe. And this is almost the master-work of the tale-teller—that is, if the soliloquy be really in words, what self-commune is in the dim and tangled recesses of the human heart! But to this privilege we are rarely admitted in the case of Olivier Dalibard; for he rarely communed with himself; a sort of mental calculation, it is true, eternally went on within him, like the wheels of a destiny; but it had become a mechanical operation—seldom disturbed by that *consciousness of thought*, with its struggles of fear and doubt, conscience and crime, which gives its appalling interest to the soliloquy of tragedy. Amidst the tremendous secrecy of that profound intellect, as at the bottom of the sea, only monstrous images of terror, things of prey, stirred in cold-blooded and devouring life; but into these deeps Olivier himself did not dive. He did not face his own soul; his outer life and his inner life seemed separate individualities, just as, in some complicated State, the social machine goes on through all its numberless cycles of vice and dread, whatever the acts of the government, which is the representative of the state, and stands for the state in the shallow judgment of history.

Before this time Olivier Dalibard's manner to his son had greatly changed from the indifference it betrayed in England: it was kind and affectionate, almost caressing; while on the other hand, Gabriel, as if in possession of some secret which gave him power over his father, took a more careless and independent tone, often absented himself from the house for days together, joined the revels of young profligates older than himself, with whom he had formed acquaintance, indulged in spendthrift expenses, and plunged prematurely into the stream of vicious pleasures that oozed through the mud of Paris.

One morning, Dalibard, returning from a visit to Madame Bellanger, found Gabriel alone in the *salon*, contemplating his fair face and gay dress in one of the mirrors, and smoothing down the hair, which he wore long and sleek, as in the portraits of Raffaelle. Dalibard's lip curled at the boy's coxcombery, though such tastes he himself had fostered, according to his ruling principles, that to govern, you must find a foible, or instil it; but the sneer changed into a smile.

"Are you satisfied with yourself, *joli garçon?*" he said, with saturine playfulness.

"At least, sir, I hope that you will not be ashamed of me, when you formally legiti-

matize me as your son. The time has come, you know, to keep your promise."

"And it shall be kept, do not fear. But first, I have an employment for you—a mission—your first embassy, Gabriel."

"I listen, sir."

"I have to send to England a communication of the utmost importance—public importance—to the secret agent of the French government. We are on the eve of a descent on England. We are in correspondence with some in London on whom we count for support. A man might be suspected, and searched—mind, *searched*. You, a boy, with English name and speech, will be my safest envoy. Buonaparte approves my selection. On your return, he permits me to present you to him. He loves the rising generation. In a few days, you will be prepared to start."

Despite the calm tone of the father, so had the son, from the instinct of fear and self-preservation, studied every accent, every glance of Olivier—so had he constituted himself a spy upon the heart whose perfidy was ever armed, that he detected at once in the proposal some scheme hostile to his interests. He made, however, no opposition to the plan suggested; and, seemingly satisfied with his obedience, the father dismissed him.

As soon as he was in the streets, Gabriel went straight to the house of Madame Bellanger. The hotel had been purchased in her name, and she therefore retained it. Since her husband's death, he had avoided that house, before so familiar to him; and now he grew pale, and breathed hard, as he passed by the porter's lodge up the lofty stairs.

He knew of his father's recent and constant visits at the house; and, without conjecturing precisely what were Olivier's designs, he connected them, in the natural and acquired shrewdness he possessed, with the wealthy widow. He resolved to watch, observe, and draw his own conclusions. As he entered Madame Bellanger's room rather abruptly, he observed her push aside amongst her papers something she had been gazing on—something which sparkled to his eyes. He sate himself down close to her with the caressing manner he usually adopted towards women; and in the midst of the babbling talk with which ladies generally honor boys, he suddenly, as if by accident, displaced the papers, and saw his father's miniature set in brilliants. The start of the widow, her blush, and her exclamation, strengthened the light that flashed upon his mind. "O-ho, I see now," he said, laughing, "why my father is always praising black hair: and—nay, nay—gentleman may admire ladies in Paris, surely!"

"Pooh, my dear child, your father is an old friend of my poor husband's, and a near relation too! But Gabriel, *mon petit ange!* you had better not say at home that you have seen this picture,—Madame Dalibard might be foolish enough to be angry."

"To be sure not. I have kept a secret before now!" and again the boy's cheek grew pale, and he looked hurriedly round.

"And you are very fond of Madame Dalibard, too, so you must not vex her."

"Who says I'm fond of Madame Dalibard?—a stepmother!"

"Why, your father, of course—*il est si bon—ce pauvre Dalibard;* and all men like cheerful faces, but then, poor lady—an English woman so strange here—very natural she should fret, and with bad health, too."

"Bad health, ah! I remember!—*she* also does not seem likely to live long!"

"So your poor father apprehends. Well, well, how uncertain life is! Who would have thought dear Bellanger would have——"

Gabriel rose hastily, and interrupted the widow's pathetic reflections. "I only ran in to say, *Bou jour*. I must leave you now."

"Adieu, my dear boy—not a word on the miniature! By-the-by, here's a shirt-pin for you—*tu es joli comme un amour.*"

All was now clear to Gabriel—it was necessary to get rid of him, and for ever! Dalibard might dread his attachment to Lucretia—he would dread still more his closer intimacy with the widow of Bellanger, should that widow wed again—and Dalibard, need like her (by what means?) be her choice! Into that abyss of wickedness, fathomless to the innocent, the young villanous eye plunged, and surveyed the ground; a terror seized on him—a terror of life and death. Would Dalibard spare even his own son, if that son had the power to injure? This mission—was it exile only?—only a fall back to the old squalor of his uncle's studio?—only the laying aside of a useless tool—or was it a snare to the grave? Demon, as Dalibard was, doubtless the boy wronged

him. But guilt construes guilt for the worst. Gabriel had formerly enjoyed the thought to match himself, should danger come, with Dalibard; the hour *had* come, and he felt his impotence. Brave his father, and refuse to leave France! from that even his reckless hardihood shrank as from inevitable destruction. But to depart—be the poor victim and dupe; after having been let loose amongst the riot of pleasure, to return to labor and privation—from that option his vanity and his senses vindictively revolted. And Lucretia!—the only being who seemed to have a human kindness to him!—through all the vicious egotism of his nature, he had some grateful sentiments for her!—and even the egotism assisted that unwonted amiability, for he felt that, Lucretia gone, he had no hold on his father's house—that the home of her successor never would be his. While thus brooding, he lifted his eyes, and saw Dalibard pass in his carriage towards the Tuileries. The house, then, was clear—he could see Lucretia alone. He formed his resolution at once, and turned homewards. As he did so, he observed a man at the angle of the street, whose eyes followed Dalibard's carriage with an expression of unmistakeable hate and revenge; but scarcely had he marked the countenance, before the man, looking hurriedly round, darted away and was lost amongst the crowd.

Now, that countenance was not quite unfamiliar to Gabriel. He had seen it before, as he saw it now,—hastily, and, as it were, by fearful snatches. Once he had marked, on returning home at twilight, a figure lurking by the house—and something in the quickness with which it turned from his gaze, joined to his knowledge of Dalibard's apprehensions, made him mention the circumstance to his father, when he entered. Dalibard bade him hasten with a note, written hurriedly, to an agent of the police, whom be kept lodged near at hand. The man was still on the threshold, when the boy went out on this errand, and he caught a glimpse of his face; but before the police-agent reached the spot, the ill-omened apparition had vanished. Gabriel now, as his his eye rested full upon that threatening brow, and those burning eyes, was convinced that he saw before him the terrible Pierre Guillot, whose very name blenched his father's cheek, When the figure retreated, he resolved at once to pursue. He hurried through the crowd amidst which the man had disappeared, and looked eagerly into the faces of those he jostled—sometimes, at the distance, he caught sight of a figure, which appeared to resemble the one which he pursued, but the likeness faded on approach.

The chase, however, vague and desultory as it was, led him on till his way was lost amongst labyrinths of narrow and unfamiliar streets. Heated and thirsty, he paused at last before a small *café*—entered to ask for a draught of lemonade—and behold, chance had favored him!—the man he sought was seated there, before a bottle of wine, and intently reading the newspaper. Gabriel sat himself down at the adjoining table. In a few moments the man was joined by a new comer—the two conversed, but in whispers so low, that Gabriel was unable to hear their conversation—though he caught more than once the name of "George." Both the men were violently excited, and the expression of their countenances was menacing and sinister. The first comer pointed often to the newspaper, and read passages from it to his companion. This suggested to Gabriel the demand for another journal. When the waiter brought it to him, his eye rested upon a long paragraph, in which the name of George Cadoudal frequently occurred. In fact, all the journals of the day were filled with speculations on the conspiracy and trial of that fiery martyr to an erring adaptation of a noble principle. Gabriel knew that his father had had a principal share in the detection of the defeated enterprise; and his previous persuasions were confirmed.

His sense of hearing grew sharper by continued effort, and at length he heard the first-comer say distinctly—"If I were but sure that I had brought this fate upon George, by introducing to him that accursed Dalibard—if my oath did but justify me, I would——;" the concluding sentence was lost. A few moments after, the two men rose, and from the familiar words that passed between them and the master of the *café*, who approached, himself, to receive the reckoning, the shrewd boy perceived that the place was no unaccustomed haunt. He crept nearer and nearer; and as the landlord shook hands with his customer, he heard distinctly the former address him by the name of "Guillot." When the men with-

drew, Gabriel followed them at a distance, (taking care first to impress on his memory the name of the *café*, and the street in which it was placed) and, as he thought, unobserved; he was mistaken. Suddenly, in one street, more solitary than the rest, the man whom he was mainly bent on tracking, turned round—advanced to Gabriel, who was on the other side of the street, and laid his hand upon him so abruptly, that the boy was fairly taken by surprise.

"Who bade you follow us?" said he, with so dark and fell an expression of countenance, that even Gabriel's courage failed him: "no evasion—no lies—speak out, and at once;" and the grasp tightened on the boy's throat.

Gabriel's readiness of resource and presence of mind did not long forsake him.

"Loose your hold, and I will tell you—you stifle me." The man slightly relaxed his grasp, and Gabriel said, quickly—"My mother perished on the guillotine in the Reign of Terror; I am for the Bourbons. I thought I overheard words which showed sympathy for poor George, the brave *Chouan*. I followed you; for I thought I was following friends."

The man smiled as he fixed his steady eye upon the unflinching child: "My poor lad," he said, gently, "I believe you—pardon me—but follow us no more—we are dangerous!" He waved his hand, and strode away, rejoined his companion, and Gabriel reluctantly abandoned the pursuit, and went homeward. It was long before he reached his father's house, for he had strayed into a strange quarter of Paris, and had frequently to inquire the way. At length he reached home and ascended the stairs to a small room, in which Lucretia usually sat, and which was divided by a narrow corridor from the sleeping chamber of herself and Dalibard. His step-mother, leaning her cheek upon her hand, was seated by the window, so absorbed in some gloomy thoughts, which cast over her rigid face a shade, intense and solemn as despair, that she did not perceive the approach of the boy till he threw his arm round her neck, aud then she started as in alarm——

"You! only *you*," she said, with a constrained smile; "see, my nerves are not so strong as they were!"

"You are disturbed, *belle mère*—has *he* been vexing you?"

"He—Dalibard—no, indeed, we were only, this morning, discussing matters of business."

"Business!—that means money!"

"Truly," said Lucretia, "money does make the staple of life's business. In spite of his new appointment, your father needs some sums in hand—favors are to be bought—opportunities for speculation occur, and——"

"And my father," interrupted Gabriel, "wishes your consent to raise the rest of your portion."

Lucretia looked surprised, but answered quietly: "He had my consent long since, but the trustees to the marriage settlement—mere men of business—my uncle's bankers, for I had lost all claim on my kindred—refuse, or at least interpose such difficulties as amount to refusal."

"But that reply came some days since," said Gabriel, musingly.

"How did you know—did your father tell you?"

"Poor *belle mère!*" said Gabriel, almost with pity, "can you live in this house, and not watch all that passes—every stranger, every message, every letter?—But what, then, does he wish with you?"

"He has suggested my returning to England, and seeing the trustees myself. His interest can obtain my passport."

"And you have refused?"

"I have not consented."

"Consent!—hush!—your maid—Marie is not waiting without," and Gabriel rose and looked forth; "no, confound these doors! none close as they ought in this house. Is it not a clause in your settlement that half of your fortune now invested goes to the survivor?"

"It is," replied Lucretia, struck and thrilled at the question. "How, again, did you know this?"

"I saw my father reading the copy. If you die first, then, he has all! If he merely wanted the money he would not send you away!"

There was a terrible pause. Gabriel resumed: "I trust you, it may be, with my life; but I will speak out. My father goes much to Bellanger's widow—she is rich and weak. Come to England! Yes, *come*—for he is about to dismiss *me*. He fears that I shall be in the way, to warn you, perhaps, or to—to—in short, *both* of us are in his way. He gives

you an escape. Once in England, the war which is breaking out will prevent your return. He will twist the laws of divorce to his favor —he will marry again! What then?—he spares you what remains of your fortune—he spares your life. Remain here—cross his schemes—and—no, no;—come to England—safer anywhere than here!"

As he spoke, great changes had passed over Lucretia's countenance. At first it was the flash of conviction, then the stunned shock of horror; now she rose—rose to her full height —and there was a lived and deadly light in her eyes—the light of conscious courage, and power, and revenge. "Fool," she muttered, "with all his craft! Fool, fool! As if, in the war of household perfidy, the woman did not always conquer! Man's only chance is to be mailed in honor!"

"But," said Gabriel, overhearing her, "but you do not remember what it is. There is nothing you can see, and guard against. It is not like an enemy face to face; it is death in the food, in the air, in the touch. You stretch out your arms in the dark—you feel nothing, and you die! Oh, do not fancy that I have not thought well (for I am almost a man now) if there were no means to resist—there are none! As well make head against the plague—it is in the atmosphere. Come to England, and return. Live poorly, if you must —but live!—but *live!*"

"Return to England poor and despised, and bound still to him, or a disgraced and divorced wife—disgraced by the low-born dependent on my kinsman's house—and fawn perhaps upon my sister and her husband for bread! Never! —I am at my post, and I will not fly!"

"Brave! brave!" said the boy, clapping his hands, and sincerely moved by a daring superior to his own—"I wish I could help you!"

Lucretia's eye rested on him with the full gaze, so rare in its looks. She drew him to her, and kissed his brow—"Boy, through life, whatever our guilt and its doom, we are bound to each other. I may yet live to have wealth —if so, it is yours as a son's. I may be iron to others—never to you. Enough of this—I must reflect!" She passed her hands over her eyes a moment, and resumed—"You would help me in my self-defence; I think you can. You have been more alert in your watch than I have. You must have means I have not secured. Your father guards well all his papers!"

"I have keys to every desk. My foot passed the threshold of that room under the roof, before yours. But, no; his powers can never be yours! He has never confided to you half his secrets! He has antidotes for every—every——"

"Hist! what noise is that? Only the shower on the casements! No, no, child, that is not my object. Cadoudal's conspiracy! Your father has letters from Fouché, which show how he has betrayed others who are stronger to avenge than a woman and a boy."

"Well!"

"I would have those letters! Give me the keys! But hold!—Gabriel—Gabriel, you may yet misjudge him. This woman—wife to the dead man—*his* wife! Horror! Have you not proofs of what you imply?"

"Proofs!" echoed Gabriel, in a tone of of wonder, "I can but see and conjecture. You are warned, watch and decide for yourself. But again I say, come to England; *I* shall go!"

Without reply, Lucretia took the keys from Gabriel's half-reluctant hand, and passed into her husband's writing room. When she had entered, she locked the door. She passed at once to a huge secretary, of which the key was small as a fairy's work. She opened it with ease by one of the counterfeits. No love correspondence—the first object of her search, for she was woman—met her eye. What need of letters, when interviews were so facile! But she soon found a document that told all which love-letters could tell—it was an account of the monies and possessions of Madame Bellanger—and there were pencil notes on the margin:—"Vautran will give 400,000 francs for the lands in Auvergne—to be accepted. Consult on the power of sale granted to a second husband. Query, if there is no chance of the heir-at-law disputing the monies invested in Madame B.'s name,"—and such memoranda as a man notes down in the schedule of properties about to be his own. In these inscriptions there was a hideous mockery of all love—like the blue lights of corruption, they showed the black vault of the heart.

The pale reader saw what her own attrac-

tions had been, and, fallen as she was, she smiled superior in her bitterness of scorn. Arranged methodically with the precision of business. she found the letters she next looked for; one recognizing Dalibard's services in the detection of the conspiracy, and authorizing him to employ the police in the search of Pierre Guillot, sufficed for her purpose. She withdrew, and secreted it. She was about to lock up the secretary, when her eye fell on the title of a small MS. volume in a corner; and as she read, she pressed one hand convulsively to her heart, while, twice with the other, she grasped the volume, and twice withdrew the grasp. The title ran harmlessly thus:—*Philosophical and chemical inquiries into the nature and materials of the poisons in use between the 14th and 16th centuries.*" Hurriedly, and at last, as if doubtful of herself, she left the MS., closed the secretary, and returned to Gabriel.

"You have got the paper you seek?" he said.

"Yes."

"Then whatever you do, you must be quick—he will soon discover the loss."

"I will be quick."

"It is I whom he will suspect," said Gabriel, in alarm, as that thought struck him. "No, for my sake, do not take the letter till I am gone. Do not fear, in the meantime—he will do nothing against you, while I am here."

"I will replace the letter till then," said Lucretia, meekly. "You have a right to my first thoughts." So she went back, and Gabriel, (suspicious, perhaps,) crept after her.

As she replaced the document, he pointed to the MS. which had tempted her—"I have seen that before, how I longed for it! If anything ever happens to him, I claim *that* as my legacy."

Their hands met as he said this, and grasped each other convulsively; Lucretia relocked the secretary, and when she gained the next room, she tottered to a chair. Her strong nerves gave way for the moment; she uttered no cry, but, by the whitenees of her face, Gabriel saw that she was senseless; senseless for a minute or so—scarcely more. But the return to consciousness with a clenched hand, and a brow of defiance, and s stare of mingled desperation and dismay, seemed rather the awaking from some frightful dream of violence and struggle than the slow languid recovery from the faintness of a swoon. Yes, henceforth, to sleep, was to couch by a serpent—to breathe was to listen for the avalanche! Thou who dids ttrifle so wantonly with Treason, now gravely front the grim comrade thou hast won; thou scheming desecrator of the Household Gods, now learn, to the last page of dark knowledge, what the hearth is without them.

Gabriel was strangely moved as he beheld that proud and solitary despair. An instinct of nature had hitherto checked him from actively aiding Lucretia in that struggle with his father, which could but end in the destruction of one or the other. He had contented himself with forewarnings, with hints, with indirect suggestions; but now, all his sympathy was so strongly roused on her behalf, that the last faint scruple of filial conscience vanished into the abyss of blood, over which stood that lonely Titaness. He drew near, and, clasping her hand, said, in a quick and broken voice—

"Listen! You know where to find proof of my fa—— that is, of—Dalibard's treason to the conspirators; you know the name of the man he dreads as an avenger, and you know that he waits but the proof to strike; but you do not know where to find that man, if his revenge is wanting for yourself. The police has not hunted him out; how can you? Accident has made me acquainted with one of his haunts. Give me a single promise, and I will put you at least upon that clue—weak, perhaps but as yet the sole one to be followed. Promise me that, only in defence of your own life, not for mere jealousy, you will avail yourself of the knowledge, and you shall know all I do!"

"Do you think," said Lucretia, in a calm, cold voice, "that it is for jealousy, which is love, that I would murder all hope, all peace? for we have here—(and she smote her breast)—here, if not elsewhere, a heaven and a hell! Son, I will not harm your father, except in self-defence! But tell me nothing that may make the son a party in the father's doom."

"The father slew the mother," muttered Gabriel, between his clenched teeth; "and to me, you have well nigh supplied her place. Strike, if need be, in her name! If you are driven to want the arm of Pierre Guillot, seek news of him at the *Café Dufour, Rue S*——,

Boulevard du Temple. Be calm, now, I hear your husband's step."

A few days more, and Gabriel is gone! Wife and husband are alone with each other. Lucretia has refused to depart. Then that mute coma of horror! that suspense of two foes in the conflict of death—for the subtle prying eye of Olivier Dalibard sees that he himself is suspected—farther he shuns from sifting! Glance fastens on glance, and then hurries smilingly away. From the cup, grims a skeleton—at the board, warns a spectre. But how kind still the words, and how gentle the tone; and they lie down side by side in the marriage bed—brain plotting against brain, heart loathing heart. It is a duel of life and death, between those sworn through life and beyond death at the altar. But it is carried on with all the forms and courtesies of duel in the age of chivalry. No conjugal wrangling—no slip of the tongue;—the oil is on the surface of the wave—the monsters in the hell of the abyss war invisibly below. At length, a dull torpor creeps over the woman—she feels the taint in her veins,—the slow victory is begun. What mattered all her vigilance and caution? Vainly glide from the pangs of the serpent, his very breath suffices to destroy! Pure seems the draught and wholesome the viand—that master of the science of murder needs not the means of the bungler! Then, keen and strong from the creeping lethargy started the fierce instinct of self and the ruthless impulse of revenge. Not too late yet to escape; for those subtle banes, that are to defy all detection, work but slowly to their end.

One evening, a woman, closely mantled, stood at watch by the angle of a wall. The light came dim and muffled from the window of a *café* hard at hand—the reflection slept amidst the shadows on the dark pavement, and, save a solitary lamp, swung at distance in the vista over the centre of the narrow street, no ray broke the gloom. The night was clouded and starless, the wind moaned in gusts, and the rain fell heavily; but the gloom and the loneliness did not appal the eye, and the wind did not chill the heart, and the rain fell unheeded on the head, of the woman at her post. At times, she paused in her slow, sentry-like pace to and fro, to look through the window of the *café*, and her gaze fell always on one figure seated apart from the rest. At length, her pulse beat more quickly and the patient lips smiled sternly. The figure had risen to depart. A man came out, and walked quickly up the street, the woman approached, and when the man was under the single lamp swung aloft, he felt his arm touched; the woman was at his side, and looking steadily into his face—

"You are Pierre Guillot, the Breton, the friend of George Cadoudal. Will you be his avenger?"

The *Chouan's* first impulse had been to place his hand in his vest, and something shone bright in the lamp-light, clasped in those iron fingers. The voice and the manner reassured him, and he answered readily—

"I am he whom you seek, and I only live to avenge."

"Read, then, and act," answered the woman, and she placed a paper in his hands.

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At Laughton the babe is on the breast of the fair mother; and the father sits beside the bed; and mother and father dispute almost angrily whether mother or father, those soft rounded features of slumbering infancy resemble most. At the red house, near the market town, there is a hospitable bustle. William is home, earlier than usual. Within the last hour, Susan has been thrice into every room. Husband and wife are now watching at the window. The good Fieldens, with a coach full of children, are expected, every moment, on a week's visit, at least.

In the *café* in the *Boulevard du Temple*, sit Pierre Guillot, the *Chouan*, and another of the old band of *brigands*, whom George Cadoudal had mustered in Paris. There is an expression of content on Guillot's countenance—it seems more open than usual, and there is a complacent smile on his lips. He is whispering low to his friend, in the intervals of eating, an employment pursued with the hearty gusto of a hungry man. But his friend did not seem to sympathize with the cheerful feelings of his comrade; he is pale, and there is terror on his face; and you may see that the journal in his hand trembles like a leaf.

In the gardens of the Tuileries, some score or so of gossips group together.

"And no news of the murderer?" asked one.

"No; but a man who had been friend to Robespierre must have made secret enemies enough."

"*Ce pauvre Dalibard!* He was not mixed up with the *Terrorists*, nevertheless."

"Ah, but the more deadly for that, perhaps—a sly man was Olivier Dalibard!'

"What's the matter?" said an *employé*, lounging up to the group. "Are you talking of Olivier Dalibard? It is but the other day he had Marsan's appointment. He is now to have Pleyel's. I heard it two days ago—a capital thing! *Peste, il ira loin!* We shall see him a senator soon."

"Speak for yourself," quoth a *ci-devant* Abbé, with a laugh. "I should be sorry to see him again, soon, wherever he be."

"*Plait-il!*—I don't understand you!"

"Don't you know that Olivier Dalibard is murdered—found stabbed—in his own house, too!"

"*Ciel!* Pray tell me all you know. His place, then, is vacant!"

"Why, it seems that Dalibard, who had been brought up to medicine, was still fond of chemical experiments. He hired a room at the top of the house for such scientific amusements. He was accustomed to spend part of his nights there. They found him at morning, bathed in his blood, with three ghastly wounds in his side, and his fingers cut to the bone. He had struggled hard with the knife that butchered him."

"In his own house!" said a lawyer: "some servant or spendthrift heir!"

"He has no heir but young Bellanger, who will be *riche à millions*, and is now but a schoolboy at Lyons. No: it seems that the window was left open, and that it communicates with the roof-tops. There the murderer had entered, and by that way escaped, for they found the leads of the gutter dabbled with blood. The next house was uninhabited—easy enough to get in there, and lie *perdu* till night."

"Hum," said the lawyer; "but the assassin could only have learned Dalibard's habits from some one in the house. Was the deceased married?"

"Oh, yes; to an Englishwoman."

"She had lovers, perhaps?"

"Pooh! lovers!—the happiest couple ever known! You should have seen them together. I dined there last week."

"It is strange!" said the lawyer.

"And he was getting on so well," muttered a hungry-looking man.

"And his place is vacant!" repeated the *employé*, as he quitted the crowd, abstractedly.

In the house of Olivier Dalibard sits Lucretia, alone, and in her own usual morning room. The officer appointed to such tasks by the French law, has performed his visit, and made his notes, and expressed condolence with the widow, and promised justice and retribution, and placed his seal on the locks till the representatives of the heir-at-law shall arrive; and the heir-at-law is the very boy who had succeeded so unexpectedly to the wealth of Jean Bellanger, the contractor! But Lucretia has obtained beforehand all she wishes to save from the rest. An open box is on the floor, into which her hand drops noiselessly a volume in manuscript. On the forefinger of that hand is a ring, larger and more massive than those usually worn by women;—by Lucretia never worn before. Why should that ring have been selected with such care from the dead man's hoards? Why so precious the dull opal in that cumbrous setting? From the hand the volume drops without sound into the box, as those whom the secrets of the volume instruct you to destroy, may drop without noise into the grave. The trace of some illness, recent and deep, nor conquered yet, has ploughed lines in that young countenance, and dimmed the light of those searching eyes. Yet courage! the poison is arrested—the poisoner is no more—minds like thine, stern woman, are cased in coffers of steel, and the rust as yet has gnawed no deeper than the surface. So, over that face stamped with bodily suffering, plays a calm smile of triumph. The schemer has baffled the schemer! Turn now to the right, pass by that narrow corridor, you are in the marriage chamber—the windows are closed. Tall tapers burn at the foot of the bed. Now go back to that narrow corridor; disregarded, thrown aside, are a cloth and a besom; the cloth is wet still; but here, and there, the red stains are dry, and clotted as with bloody glue: and the hairs of the besom starts up, torn and ragged, as if the bristles had a sense of some horror—as if things inanimate still partook of men's dread at men's

deeds. If you passed through the corridor, and saw in the shadow of the wall that homeliest of instruments cast away and forgotten, you would smile at the slatternly house-work. But if you knew that a corpse had been borne down those stairs to the left—borne along those floors to that marriage bed, with the blood oozing, and gushing, and plashing below, as the bearers passed with their burthen, then, straight that dead thing would take the awe of the dead being; it told its own tale of violence and murder; it had dabbled in the gore of the violated clay; it had become an evidence of the crime. No wonder that its hairs bristled up, sharp and ragged, in the shadow of the wall!

The first part of the tragedy ends. Let fall the curtain. When next it rises, years will have passed away, graves uncounted will have wrought fresh hollows in our merry sepulchre —sweet earth! Take a sand from the shore, take a drop from the ocean, less than sand-grain, and drop in man's planet one Death and one Crime! On the map, trace all oceans, and search out every shore,—more than seas, more than lands, in God's balance shall weigh one Death and one Crime!

END OF PART ONE.

PART THE SECOND.

PROLOGUE TO PART THE SECOND.

THE century has advanced: The rush of the deluge has ebbed back, the old landmarks have reappeared; the dynasties Napoleon willed into life have crumbled to the dust; the plough has passed over Waterloo; autumn after autumn the harvests have glittered on that grave of an empire. Through the immense ocean of universal change, we look back on the single track which our frail boat has cut through the waste. As a star shines impartially over the measureless expanse, though it seems to gild but *one* broken line to each eye; so, as our memory gazes on the past, the light spreads not over all the breadth of the waste, where nations have battled, and argosies gone down—it falls narrow, and confined, along the single course we have taken: we lean over the small raft on which we float, and see the sparkles but reflected from the waves that it divides.

On the terrace at Laughton, but *one* step paces slowly. The bride clings not now to the bridegroom's arm. Though pale and worn, it is still the same gentle face; but the blush of woman's love has gone from it evermore.

Charles Vernon (to call him still by the name in which he is best known to us), sleeps in the vault of the St. Johns. He had lived longer than he himself had expected, than his physician had hoped—lived, cheerful and happy, amidst quiet pursuits and innocent excitements. Three sons had blessed his hearth, to mourn over his grave. But the two elder were delicate and sickly. They did not long survive him, and died within a few months of each other. The third seemed formed of a difierent mould and constitution from his brethren. To him descended the ancient heritage of Laughton, and he promised to enjoy it long.

It is Vernon's widow who walks alone in the stately terrace; sad still, for she loved well the choice of her youth, and she misses yet the children in the grave; from the date of Vernon's death, she wore mourning without and within; and the sorrows that came later, broke more the bruised reed;—sad still, but resigned. One son survives; and earth yet has the troubled hopes and the holy fears of affection. Though that son be afar, in sport or in earnest, in pleasure or in toil, working out his destiny as man, still that step in less solitary than it seems. When does the son's image not walk beside the mother? Though she lives in seclusion, though the gay world tempts no more, the gay world is yet linked to her thoughts. From the distance she hears its murmurs in music. Her fancy still mingles with the crowd, and follows one, to her eye, outshining all the rest. Never vain in herself, she is vain now of another; and the small triumphs of the young and well-born seem trophies of renown to the eyes so tenderly deceived.

In the old-fashioned market town still the business goes on, still the doors of the Bank open and close every moment on the great day of the week; but the names over the threshold are partially changed. The junior partner is busy no more at the desk; not wholly forgotten—if his name still is spoken, it is not with thankfulness and praise. A something rests on the name—that something which dims and attaints—not proven, not certain, but suspected and dubious. The head shakes, the voice whispers,—and the attorney now lives in the solid red house at the verge of the town.

In the vicarage, Time, the old scythe-

bearer, had not paused from his work. Still employed on Greek texts, little changed, save that his hair is grey, and that some lines in his kindly face tell of sorrows as of years, the Vicar sits in his parlor, but the children no longer, blithe-voiced and rose-cheeked, dart through the rustling espaliers. Those children, grave men, or staid matrons (save one whom Death chose, and therefore now of all best beloved)! are at their posts in the world. The young ones are flown from the nest, and, with anxious wings, here and there, search food in their turn for their young. But the blithe voice and rose-cheek of the child make not that loss which the hearth misses the most. From childhood to manhood, and from manhood to departure, the natural changes are gradual and prepared. The absence most missed is that household life which presided, which kept things in order, and must be coaxed if a chair were displaced. The providence in trifles, that clasp of small links, that dear, bustling agency—now pleased, now complaining—dear alike in each change of its humor; that active life which has no self of it sown;—like the mind of a poet, though its prose be the humblest, transferring self into others, with its right to be cross, and its charter to scold;—for the motive is clear—it takes what it loves too anxiously to heart. The door of the parlor is open, the garden path still passes before the threshold; but no step now has full right to halt at the door, and interrupt the grave thought on Greek texts;—no small talk on details and wise savings chimes in with the wrath of *Medea*. The Prudent Genius is gone from the household; and perhaps as the good scholar now wearily pauses, and looks out on the silent garden, he would have given with joy all that Athens produced, from Æschylus to Plato, to hear again from the old familiar lips the lament on torn jackets, or the statistical economy of eggs!

But see, though the wife is no more, though the children have departed, the Vicar's home is not utterly desolate. See, along the same walk on which William soothed Susan's fears, and won her consent—see, what fairy advances? Is it Susan returned to youth? How like!—yet, look again, and how unlike! The same, the pure, candid *regard*—the same, the clear, limpid blue of the eye—the same, that fair hue of the hair—light, but not auburn—more subdued, more harmonious than that equivocal color which too nearly approaches to red. But how much more blooming and joyous than Susan's is that exquisite face in which all Hebe smiles forth—how much arier the tread, light with health — how much rounder, if slighter still, the wave of that undulating form! She smiles—her lips move—she is conversing with herself—she cannot be all silent, even when alone; for the sunny gladness of her nature must have vent like a bird's.

But do not fancy that that gladness speaks the levity which comes from the absence of thought; it is rather from the depth of thought that it springs, as from the depth of a sea comes its music. See, while she pauses and listehs, with her finger half raised to her lip, as amidst that careless jubilee of birds she hears a note more grave and sustained, the nightingale singing, by day,—(as sometimes, though rarely, he is heard—perhaps, because he misses his mate—perhaps, because he sees from his bower the creeping form of some foe to his race);—see, as she listens now to that plaintive, low-chanted warble, how quickly the smile is sobered, how the shade, soft and pensive, steals over the brow. It is but the mystic sympathy with Nature that bestows the smile or the shade. In that heart lightly moved beats the fine sense of the poet. It is the exquisite sensibility of the nerves that sends its blithe play to those spirits, and from the clearness of the atmosphere comes, warm and ethereal, the ray of that light.

And does the roof of the pastor give shelter to Helen Mainwaring's youth? Has Death taken from her the natural protectors? Those forms which we saw so full of youth and youth's heart, in that very spot,—has the grave closed on them yet? *Yet!*—how few attain to the age of the Psalmist! Twenty-seven years have passed since that date—how often, in those years, have the dark doors opened for the young as for the old! William Mainwaring died first, care-worn and shame-bowed: the blot on his name had cankered into his heart. Susan's life, always precarious, had struggled on, while he lived, by the strong power of affection and will;—she would not die, for who then could console him? but at his death the power gave way. She lingered, but lingered dyingly for three years; and then,

for the first time since William's death, she smiled—that smile remained on the lips of the corpse. They had had many trials, that young couple whom we left so prosperous and happy! Not till many years after their marriage had one sweet consoler been born to them. In the season of poverty, and shame, and grief, it came; and there was no pride on Mainwaring's brow when they placed his first-born in his arms. By her will, the widow consigned Helen to the joint guardianship of Mr. Fielden and her sister: but the latter was abroad, her address unknown, so the Vicar for two years had had sole charge of the orphan. She was not unprovided for.

The sum that Susan brought to her husband had been long since gone, it is true—lost in the calamity which had wrecked William Mainwaring's name and blighted his prospects—but Helen's grandfather, the land-agent, had died some time subsequent to that event, and, indeed, just before William's death. He had never forgiven his son the stain on his name—never assisted, never even seen him since that fatal day—but he left to Helen a sum of about 8000*l.*,—for she, at least, was innocent. In Mr Fielden's eyes, Helen was therefore an heiress. And who amongst his small range of acquaintance was good enough for her, not only so richly portioned, but so lovely;—accomplished too, for her parents had of late years lived chiefly in France, and languages there are easily learned, and masters cheap? Mr. Fielden knew but one, whom Providence had also consigned to his charge—the supposed son of his old pupil Ardworth; but though a tender affection existed between the two young persons, it seemed too like that of a brother and sister, to afford much ground for Mr. Fielden's anxiety or hope.

From his window the Vicar observed the still attitude of the young orphan for a few moments, then he pushed aside his books, rose, and approached her. At the sound of his tread, she woke from her reverie, and bounded lightly towards him.

"Ah, you would not see me before!" she said, in a voice in which there was the slightest possible foreign accent, which betrayed the country in which her childhood had been passed—"I peeped in twice at the window. I wanted you so much, to walk to the village. But you will come now—will you not?" added the girl, coaxingly, as she looked up at him under the shade of her straw hat.

"And what do you want in the village, my pretty Helen?"

"Why you know it is Fair day, and you promised Bessie that you would buy her a fairing—to say nothing of me."

"Very true, and I ought to look in; it will help to keep the poor people from drinking. A clergyman should mix with his parishioners in their holidays. We must not associate our office only with grief, and sickness, and preaching. We will go. And what fairing are you to have?"

"Oh, something very brilliant, I promise you! I have formed grand notions of a fair. I am sure it must be like the bazaars we read of last night, in that charming 'Tour in the East.'"

The Vicar smiled, half benignly, half anxiously. "My dear child, it is so like you to be an eastern bazaar. If you always thus judge of things by your fancy, how this sober world will deceive you, poor Helen!"

"It is not my fault—*ne me grondez pas méchant*," answered Helen hanging her head. "But come, sir, allow, at least, that if I let my romance, as you call it, run away with me now and then, I can still content myself with the reality. What, you shake your head still! Don't you remember the sparrow?"

"Ha! ha! yes—the sparrow that the pedlar sold you for a goldfinch; and you were so proud of your purchase, and wondered so much why you could not coax the goldfinch to sing, till at last the paint wore away, and it was only a poor little sparrow!"

"Go on! Confess; did I fret, then? Was I not as pleased with my dear sparrow, as I should have been with the prettiest goldfinch that ever sang? Does not the sparrow follow me about, and nestle on my shoulder—dear little thing! And I was right after all; for if I had not fancied it a goldfinch, I should not have bought it, perhaps. But now I would not change it for a goldfinch—no, not even for that nightingale I heard just now. So let me still fancy the poor fair a bazaar; it is a double pleasure, first to fancy the bazaar, and then to be surprised at the fair."

"You argue well," said the Vicar, as they now entered the village. "I really think, in spite of all your turn for poetry, and Goldsmith,

and Cowper, that you would take as kindly to mathematics as your cousin John Ardworth, poor lad!"

"Not if mathematics have made him so grave—and so churlish, I was going to say—but that word does him wrong. Dear cousin, so kind and so rough!"

"It is not mathematics that are to blame, if he is grave and absorbed," said the Vicar, with a sigh; "it is the two cares that gnaw most—poverty and ambition."

"Nay, do not sigh: it must be such a pleasure to feel as he does, that one must triumph at last!"

"Umph!—John must have nearly reached London by this time," said Mr. Fielden, "for he is a stout walker, and this is the third day since he left us. Well, now that he is about fairly to be called to the bar, I hope that his fever will cool, and he will settle calmly to work. I have felt great pain for him during this last visit."

"Pain! But why?"

"My dear, do you remember what I read out to you both from Sir William Temple, the night before John left us?"

Helen put her hand to her brow, and with a readiness which showed a memory equally quick and retentive, replied, "Yes; was it not to this effect? I am not sure of the exact words—'To have something we have not, and be something we are not, is the root of all evil.'"

"Well remembered, my darling!"

"Ah, but," said Helen, archly, "I remember too what my cousin replied, 'If Sir William Temple had practised his theory, he would not have been ambassador at the Hague, or——'"

"Pshaw! the boy's always ready enough with his answers," interrupted Mr. Fielden, rather petulantly. "There's the fair, my dear; more in your way, I see, than Sir William Temple's philosophy."

And Helen was right—the fair was no eastern bazaar: but how delighted that young, impressionable mind was, notwithstanding! delighted with the swings and the roundabouts, the shows, the booths, even down to the gilt gingerbread kings and queens. All minds genuinely poetical, are peculiarly susceptible to movement—that is, to the excitement of numbers. If the movement is sincerely joyous, as in the mirth of a village holiday, such a nature shares insensibly in the joy. But if the movement is a false and spurious gaiety, as in a state ball, where the impassive face and languid step are out of harmony with the evident object of the scene—then the nature we speak of feels chilled and dejected. Hence it really is, that the more delicate and ideal order of minds soon grow inexpressibly weary of the hack routine of what are called fashionable pleasures. Hence the same person most alive to a dance on the green, would be without enjoyment at Almack's. It is not because one scene is a village green, and the other a room in King Street; nor is it because the actors in the one are of the humble, in the others of the noble class, but simply because the enjoyment in the first is visible and hearty, because in the other it is a listless and melancholy pretence. Helen fancied it was the swings and the booths that gave her that innocent exhilaration—it was not so; it was the unconscious sympathy with the crowd around her. When the poetical nature quits its own dreams for the actual world, it enters, and transfuses itself into the hearts and humors of others. The two wings of that spirit which we call Genius, are reverie and sympathy.

But poor little Helen had no idea that she had genius. Whether chasing the butterfly, or talking fond fancies to her birds, or whether with earnest, musing eyes, watching the stars come forth, and the dark pine trees gleam into silver; whether with airy day-dreams and credulous wonder poring over the magic tales of Mirglip or Aladdin, or whether spell-bound to awe by the solemn woes of *Lear*, or following the blind great bard into "the heaven of heavens, an earthly guest to draw empyreal air," she obeyed but the honest and varying impulse in each change of her pliant mood; and would have ascribed with genuine humility to the vagaries of childhood, that prompt gathering of pleasure—that quick shifting sport of the fancy by which Nature binds to itself, in chains undulating as melody, the lively senses of genius.

While Helen, leaning on the Vicar's arm, thus surrendered herself to the innocent excitement of the moment, the Vicar himself smiled and nodded to his parishioners, or paused to exchange a friendly word or two with the

youngest or the eldest loiterers (those two extremes of mortality which the Church so tenderly unites), whom the scene drew to its tempting vortex, when a rough-haired lad, with a leather bag strapped across his waist, turned from one of the ginger-bread booths, and touching his hat, said, "Please you, sir, I was a-coming to your house with a letter."

The Vicar's correspondence was confined and rare, despite his distant children, for letters but a few years ago were costly luxuries to persons of narrow income, and therefore the juvenile letter-carrier who plied between the Post town and the village failed to excite in his breast that indignation for being an hour or more behind his time, which would have animated one to whom the Post brings the usual event of the day. He took the letter from the boy's hand, and paid for it with a thrifty sigh, as he glanced at a handwriting unfamiliar to him—perhaps from some clergyman poorer than himself. However, that was not the place to read letters, so he put the epistle in his pocket, until Helen, who watched his countenance to see when he grew tired of the scene, kindly proposed to return home. As they gained a stile half way, Mr. Fielden remembered his letter, took it forth, and put on his spectacles. Helen stooped over the bank to gather violets; the Vicar seated himself on the stile. As he again looked at the address, the hand-writing, before unfamiliar, seemed to grow indistinctly on his recollection. That bold, firm hand—thin and fine as woman's, but large and regular as man's—was too peculiar to be forgotten. He uttered a brief exclamation of surprise and recognition, and hastily broke the seal. The contents ran thus:—

"DEAR SIR,—So many years have passed since any communication has taken place between us, that the name of Lucretia Dalibard will seem more strange to you than that of Lucretia Clavering. I have recently returned to England after a long residence abroad. I perceive by my deceased sister's will that she has confided her only daughter to my guardianshlp, conjointly with yourself. I am anxious to participate in that tender charge. I am alone in the world—an habitual sufferer—afflicted with a partial paralysis that deprives me of the use of my limbs. In such circumstances, it is the more natural that I should turn to the only relative left me. My journey to England has so exhausted my strength, and all movement is so painful, that I must request you to excuse me for not coming in person for my niece. Your benevolence, however, will, I am sure, prompt you to afford me the comfort of her society, as soon as you can contrive some suitable arrangement for her journey. Begging you to express to Helen, in my name, the assurance of such a welcome as is due from me to my sister's child, and waiting with great anxiety your reply,—I am, dear Sir, your very faithful servant,

LUCRETIA DALIBARD.

"P.S.—I can scarcely venture to ask you to bring Helen yourself to town, but I should be glad if other inducements to take the journey afforded me the pleasure of seeing you once again. I am anxious, in addition to such details of my late sister as you may be enabled to give me, to learn something of the history of her connection, Mr. Ardworth, in whom I felt much interested years ago, and who, I am recently informed, left an infant, his supposed son, under your care. So long absent from England, how much have I to learn, and how little the mere gravestones tell us of the dead!"

While the Vicar is absorbed in this letter, equally unwelcome and unexpected,—while, unconscious as the daughter of Ceres gathering flowers when the Hell King drew near, of the change that awaited her and the grim presence that approached on her fate,—Helen bends still over the bank odorous with shrinking violets, we turn where the new generation equally invites our gaze, and make our first acquaintance with two persons connected with the progress of our tale.

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The britska stopped. The servant, who had been gradually accumulating present dust and future rheumatisms on the "bad eminence" of a rumble-tumble, exposed to the nipping airs of an English sky, leapt to the ground and opened the carriage door.

"This is the best place for the view, sir—a little to the right."

Percival St. John threw aside his book, (a volume of Voyages), whistled to a spaniel dozing by his side, and descended lightly. Light was the step of the young man, and merry was the bark of the dog, as it chased from the road the startled sparrow, rising high into the clear air—favorites of Nature both, man and dog!

You had but to glance at Percival St. John, to know at once that he was of the race that toils not; the assured step spoke confidence in the world's fair smile. No care for the morrow dimmed the bold eye and the radiant bloom.

About the middle height—his slight figure, yet undeveloped, seemed not to have attained to its full growth—the darkening down only just shaded a cheek somewhat sunburnt, though naturally fair, round which locks black as jet played sportively in the fresh air—about him altogether there was the inexpressible charm of happy youth. He scarcely looked sixteen, though above four years older; but for his firm though careless step, and the open fearlessness of his frank eye, you might have almost taken him for a girl in men's clothes, not from effeminacy of feature, but from the sparkling bloom of his youth, and from his unmistakable newness to the cares and sins of man. A more delightful vision of ingenuous boyhood opening into life, under happy auspices, never inspired with pleased yet melancholy interest the eye of half envious, half pitying age.

"And that," mused Percival St. John—"that is London! Oh, for the Diable Boiteux to unroof me those distant houses, and show me the pleasures that lurk within!—Ah, what long letters I shall have to write home!—How the dear old Captain will laugh over them, and how my dear good mother will put down her work with a sigh! Home!—Um, I miss it already. How strange and grim, after all, the huge city seems!"

His glove fell to the ground, and his spaniel mumbled it into shreds. The young man laughed, and, throwing himself on the grass, played gaily with the dog.

"Fie, Beau, sir,—fie; gloves are indigestible. Restrain your appetite, and we'll lunch together at the Clarendon."

At this moment there arrived at the same patch of greensward a pedestrian some years older than Percival St. John—a tall, muscular, raw-boned, dust-covered, travel-stained pedestrian—one of your pedestrians in good earnest—no amateur in neat gambroon, manufactured by Inkson, who leaves his carriage behind him, and walks on with his fishing-rod by choice, but a sturdy wanderer, with thick shoes and strapless trousers, a thread-bare coat and a knapsack at his back. Yet withal, the young man had the air of a gentleman; not gentleman as the word is understood in St. James's, the gentleman of the noble and idle class, but the gentleman as the title is accorded, by courtesy, to all to whom both education and the habit of mixing with educated persons gives a claim to the distinction and imparts an air of refinement. The new comer was strongly built, at once lean and large—far more strongly built than Percival St. John, but without his look of cheerful and comely health.

His complexion had not the florid hues that should have accompanied that strength of body; it was pale, though not sickly; the expression grave, the lines deep, the face strongly marked. By his side trotted painfully a wiry, yellowish, foot-sore Scotch terrier. Beau sprang from his master's caress, cocked his handsome head on one side, and suspended in silent halt his right forepaw. Percival cast over his left shoulder a careless glance at the intruder. The last heeded neither Beau nor Percival. He slipped his knapsack to the ground, and the Scotch terrier sank upon it and curled himself up into a ball. The wayfarer folded his arms tightly upon his breast, heaved a short unquiet sigh, and cast over the giant city, from under deep-pent lowering brows, a look so earnest, so searching, so full of inexpressible, dogged, determined power, that Percival, roused out of his gay indifference, rose and regarded him with curious interest.

In the meanwhile Beau had very leisurely approached the bilious-looking terrier; and after walking three times round him, with a stare and a small sniff of superb impertinence, halted with great composure and lifting his hind leg—O Beau, Beau, Beau! your historian blushes for your breeding, and, like Sterne's recording angel, drops a tear upon the stain which washes it from the register—but not, alas! from the back of the bilious terrier! The space around was wide, Beau. You had all the world to choose; why select so specially for insult the single spot on which reposed the worn-out and unoffending? O, dainty Beau!—O, dainty world! Own the truth, both of ye. There is something irresistibly provocative of insult in the back of a shabby-looking dog!

The poor terrier, used to affronts, raised its heavy eyelids, and shot the gleam of just indignation from its dark eyes. But it neither stirred nor growled, and Beau, extremely pleased with his achievement, wagged his tail in triumph, and returned to master—perhaps, in parliamentary phrase, to 'report proceedings, and ask leave to sit again.'

"I wonder," soliloquized Percival St. John, "what that poor fellow is thinking of;—perhaps he *is* poor, indeed!—no doubt of it, now I look again. And I so rich! I should like to—hem—let's see what he's made of."

Herewith Percival approached, and with all a boy's half bashful, half saucy frankness, said—"A fine prospect, sir."

The pedestrian started, and threw a rapid glance over the brilliant figure that accosted him. Percival St. John was not to be abashed by stern looks; but that glance might have abashed many a more experienced man. The glance of a squire upon a corn-law missionary, of a Crockford dandy upon a Regent-street tiger, could not have been more disdainful.

"Tush!" said the pedestrian, rudely, and turned upon his heel.

Percival colored, and, shall we own it? was boy enough to double his fist. Little would he have been deterred by the brawn of those great arms and the girth of that Herculean chest, if he had been quite sure that it was a proper thing to resent pugilistically so discourteous a monosyllable. The "tush!" stuck greatly in his throat. But the man, now removed to the farther verge of the hill, looked so tranquil and so lost in thought, that the short-lived anger died.

"And after all, if I was as poor as he looks, I dare say I should be just as proud," muttered Percival. "However, it's his own fault if he goes to London on foot, when I might, at least, have given him a lift. Come, Beau, sir."

With his face still a little flushed and his hat, unconsciously, cocked fiercely on one side, Percival sauntered back to his britska.

As in a whirl of dust, the light carriage was borne by the four posters down the hill, the pedestrian turned for an instant from the view before to the cloud behind, and muttered—"Ay, a fine prospect for the rich—a noble field for the poor!" The tone in which those words were said told volumes; there, spoke the pride, the hope the energy, the ambition, which make youth laborious, manhood prosperous, age renowned.

The stranger then threw himself on the sward, and coutinued his silent and intent contemplation till the clouds grew red in the west. When, then, he rose, his eye was bright, his mien erect, and a smile, playing round his firm, full lips stole the moody sternness from his hard face. Throwing his knapsack once more on his back, John Ardworth went resolutely on to the great vortex.

CHAPTER I.

The Coronation.

THE eighth of September, 1831, was a holiday in London. William the Fourth received the crown of his ancestors in that mighty church, in which the most impressive monitors to human pomp are the monuments of the dead: the dust of conquerors and statesmen, of the wise heads and the bold hands that had guarded the thrones of departed kings, slept around; and the great men of the Modern time was assembled in homage to the monarch, to whom the prowess and the liberty of generations hath bequeathed an empire in which the sun never sets. In the Abbey—thinking little of the past, caring little for the future—the immense audience gazed eagerly on the pageant that occurs but once in that division of history—the lifetime of a king. The assemblage was brilliant and imposing. The galleries sparkled with the gems of women who still upheld the celebrity for form and feature, which, from the remotest times, has been awarded to the great English race.

Below, in their robes and coronets, were men who neither in the senate nor the field have shamed their fathers. Conspicuous amongst all, for grandeur of mien and stature, towered the brothers of the king; while commanding yet more the universal gaze, were seen, here the eagle features of the old hero of Waterloo, and there the majestic brow of the haughty statesman who was leading the people (while the last of the Bourbons, whom Waterloo had restored to the Tuileries, had left the orb and purple to the kindred house, so fatal to his name), through a stormy and perilous transition to a bloodless revolution and a new charter.

Tier upon tier, in the division set apart for them, the members of the Lower House moved and murmured above the pageant; and the coronation of the new sovereign was connected in their minds with the great measure,

which, still undecided, made at that time a link between the People and the King; and arrayed against both, if not, indeed, the real Aristocracy, at least the Chamber recognized by the Constitution as its representative. Without the space, was one dense mass. Houses, from balcony to balcony, window to window, were filled as some immense theatre. Up, through the long thoroughfare to Whitehall, the eye saw that audience—A PEOPLE; and the gaze was bounded at the spot where Charles the First had passed from the banquet-house to the scaffold.

The ceremony was over; the procession had swept slowly by; the last huzza had died away. And, after staring awhile upon Orator Hunt, who had clambered up the iron palisade near Westminster Hall, to exhibit his goodly person in his court attire, the serried crowds, hurrying from the shower which then unseasonably descended, broke into large masses or lengthening columns.

In that part of London which may be said to form a boundary between its old and its new world, by which, on the one hand, you pass to Westminster, or through that gorge of the Strand which leads along endless rows of shops that have grown up on the sites of the ancient halls of the Salisburys and the Exeters, the Buckinghams and Southamptons, to the heart of the City, built around the primeval palace of the "Tower,"—while, on the other hand you pass into the new city of aristocracy and letters, of art and fashion, embracing the whilom chase of Marylebone, and the once sedge-grown waters of Pimlico;—by this ignoble boundary, (the crossing from the Opera House, at the bottom of the Haymarket to the commencement of Charing Cross), stood a person whose discontented countenance was in singular contrast with the general gaiety and animation of the day. This person, O gentle reader—this sour, querulous, discontented person—was a king, too, in his own walk! None might dispute it. He feared no rebel; he was harassed by no reform; he ruled without ministers, tools he had; but, when worn out, he replaced them without a pension or a sigh. He lived by taxes—but they were voluntary; and his Civil List was supplied, without demand for the redress of grievances. This person, nevertheless—not deposed, was suspended from his empire for the day. He was pushed aside; he was forgotten. He was not distinct from the crowd. Like Titus, he had lost a day—his vocation was gone. This person was the Sweeper of the Crossing!

He was a character! He was young, in the fairest prime of youth; but it was the face of an old man on young shoulders. His hair was long, thin, and prematurely streaked with grey; his face was pale, and deeply furrowed; his eyes hollow, and their stare gleamed, cold and stolid, under his bent and shaggy brows. The figure was at once fragile and ungainly—and the narrow shoulders curved in a perpetual stoop. It was a person once noticed that you would easily remember, and associate with some undefined, painful impression. The manner was humble, but not meek; the voice was whining, but without pathos. There was a meagre, passionless, dulness about the aspect, though, at times, it quickened into a kind of avid acuteness. No one knew by what human parentage this personage came into the world. He had been reared by the charity of a stranger, crept through childhood, and misery, and rags mysteriously; and suddenly succeeded an old defunct negro in the profitable crossing whereat he is now standing. All education was unknown to him, so was all love. In those festive haunts at St. Giles's, where he who would see 'Life in London' may often discover the boy who has held his horse in the morning, dancing merrily with his chosen damsel at night, our sweeper's character was austere as Charles the Twelfth's! And, the poor creature had his good qualities!

He was sensitively alive to kindness—little enough had been shown him to make the luxury the more prized from its rarity!—though fond of money he would part with it (we do not say cheerfully, but part with it still) not to mere want, indeed (for he had been too pinched and starved himself, and had grown too obtuse to pinching and to starving for the sensitiveness that prompts to charity), but to any of his companions who had done him a good service, or who had even warmed his dull heart by a friendly smile; he was honest, too—honest to the backbone. You might have trusted him with gold untold. Through the heavy clod which man's care had not moulded, nor books enlightened, nor the priest's solemn lore informed, still natural

rays from the great parent source of Deity struggled, fitful and dim. He had no lawful name; none knew if sponsors had ever stood security for his sins at the sacred front. But he had christened himself by the strange, unchristianlike name of "Beck." There he was, then, seemingly without origin, parentage, or kindred tie—a lonesome, squalid, bloodless thing, which the great monster, London, seemed to have spawned forth of its own self—one of its sickly, miserable, rickety offspring, whom it puts out at nurse to Penury, at school to Starvation, and, finally, and literally gives them stones for bread, with the option of the gallows or the dunghill, when the desperate offspring calls on the giant mother for return and home! And this creature did love something—loved, perhaps, some fellow-being—of that hereafter, when we dive into the secrets of his privacy. Meanwhile, openly and frankly, he loved his crossing; he was proud of his crossing; he was grateful to his crossing. God help thee, son of the street, why not! He had in it a double affection; that of serving and being served. He kept the crossing—if the crossing kept him. He smiled at times to himself when he saw it lie fair and brilliant amidst the mire round; it bestowed on him a sense of property! What a man may feel for a fine estate in a ring fence, Beck felt for that isthmus of the kennel which was subject to his broom! The Coronation had made one rebellious spirit, when it swept the sweeper from his crossing.

He stood then half under the clonnade of the Opera House, as the crowd now rapidly grew thinner and more scattered: and when the last carriage of a long string of vehicles had passed by, he muttered audibly—

"It'll take a great deal of pains to make she right again!"

"So you be's ere to-day, Beck!" said a ragamuffiin boy, who, pushing and scrambling through his betters, now halted, and wiped his forehead as he looked at the sweeper. "Vy, ve are all out pleasuring. Vy vont you come with ve?—lots of fun!"

The sweeper scowled at the urchin, and made no answer, but began sedulously to apply himself to the crossing.

"Vy, there isn't another sweep in the streets, Beck. His Majesty King Bill's Currynation makes all on us so appy!"

"It has made *she* unkimmon dirty!" returned Beck, pointing to the dingy crossing, scarce distinguished from the rest of the road.

The ragamuffin laughed.

"But ve be's goin' to ave Reform now. Beck. The peopul's to have their rights and libties, hand the luds is to be put down, hand beefsteaks is to be a penny a pound, and——"

"What good will that do to she?"

"Vy, man, ve shall take turn about, and sum vun helse will sveep the crossings, and ve shall ride in sum vun helse's coach and four prads—cos vy? ve shall hall be hequals!"

"Hequals! I tell you vot, if you keeps jawing there, atween me and she, I shall vop you, Joe—cos vy—I be's the biggest!" was the answer of Beck the sweeper to Joe the ragamuffin.

The Jovial Joe laughed aloud, snapped his fingers, threw up his ragged cap with a shout for King Bill, and set off scampering and whooping to join those festivities which Beck had so churlishly disdained.

Time crept on—evening began to close in, and Beck was still at his crossing, when a young gentleman on horseback, who, after seeing the procession, had stolen away for a quiet ride in the suburbs, reined in close by the crossing, and, looking round, as for some one to hold his horse, could discover no loiterer worthy that honor except the solitary Beck. So young was the rider, that he seemed still a boy. On his smooth countenance, all that most prepossessed in early youth left its witching stamp. A smile, at once gay and sweet played on his lips. There was a charm, even in a certain impatient petulance, in his quick eye, and the slight contraction of his delicate brows. Almaviva might well have been jealous of such a page! He was the *beau ideal* of Cherubino. He held up his whip, with an arch sign, to the sweeper. "Follow, my man," he said, in a tone, the very command of which sounded gentle, so blithe was the movement of the lips, and so silvery the easy accent; and, without waiting, he cantered carelessly down Pall Mall.

The sweeper cast a rueful glance at his melancholy domain. But he had gained but little that day, and the offer was too tempting to be rejected. He heaved a sigh, shouldered his broom, and murmuring to himself that he

would give her a last brush before he retired for the night, he put his long limbs into that swinging, shambling trot, which characterizes the motion of those professional jackals, who, having once caught sight of a groomless rider, fairly hunt him down, and appear when he least expects it, the instant he dismounts.

The young rider lightly swung himself from his sleek, high-bred grey, at the door of one of the clubs in St. James's Street, patted his horse's neck, chucked the rein to the swepper, and sauntered into the house, whistling, musically—if not from want of thought, certainly from want of care.

As he entered the club, two or three men, young, indeed, but much older, to appearance, at least, than himself, who were dining together at the same table, nodded to him their friendly greeting.

"Ah, Perce," said one, "we have only just sat down—here is a seat for you,"

The boy blushed shyly, as he accepted the proposal, and the young men made room for him at the table, with a smiling alacrity which showed that his shyness was no hindrance to his popularity.

"Who," said an elderly dandy, dining apart with some of his contemporaries—"who is that lad? One ought not to admit such mere boys into the club."

"He is the only surviving son of an old friend of ours," answered the other, dropping his eye-glass. "Young Percival St. John."

"St. John! What! Vernon St. John's son?"

"Yes."

"He has not his father's good air. These young fellows have a tone—a something—a want of self-possession, eh?"

"Very true. The fact is, that Percival was meant for the navy, and even served as a mid. for a year or so. He was a younger son, then—third I think. The two elder ones died, and Master Percival walked into the inheritance. I don't think he is quite of age yet.'

"Of age! he does not look seventeen!"

"Oh, he is more than that! I remember him in his jacket at Laughton. A fine property!"

"Ay, I don't wonder those fellows are so civil to him. This claret is corked!—every thing is so bad at this d—d club!—no wonder, when a troop of boys are let in!—enough to spoil any club!—don't know Larose from Lafitte. Waiter!"

Meanwhile, the talk round the table, at which sat Percival St. John, was animated, lively and various—the talk common with idlers; of horses, and steeple-chases, and opera-dancers, and reigning beauties, and good-humored jests at each other. In all this babble, there was freshness about Percival St. John's conversation, which showed that, as yet, for him life had the zest of novelty. He was more at home about horses and steeple-chases, than about opera-dancers, and beauties, and the small scandals of town. Talk on these latter topics did not seem to interest him; on the contrary, almost to pain. Shy and modest as a girl, he colored or looked aside when his more hardened friends boasted of assignations and love-affairs. Spirited, gay, and manly enough in all really manly points, the virgin bloom of innocence was yet visible in his frank charming manner. And often, out of respect for his delicacy, some hearty son of pleasure stopped short in his narrative, or lost the point of his anecdote; and yet so loveable was Percival in his good-humor, his *naïveteé*, his joyous entrance into innocent joy, that his companions were scarcely conscious of the *gêne* and restraint he imposed on them. Those merry, dark eyes, and that flashing smile, were conviviality of themselves. They brought with them a contagious cheerfulness, which compensated for the want of corruption.

Night had set in. St. John's companions had departed to their severel haunts, and Percival himself stood on the steps of the club, resolving that he would join the crowds that swept through the streets to gaze on the illuminations, when he perceived Beck (still at the rein of his dozing horse), whom he had quite forgot till that moment. Laughing at his own want of memory, Percival put some silver into Beck's hand—more silver than Beck had ever before received for similar service—and said:

"Well, my man, I suppose I can trust you to take my horse to his stables—No. —, the Mews, behind Curzon-street. Poor fellow, he wants his supper,—and you, too, I suppose!"

Beck smiled—a pale, hungry smile, and pulled his forelock politely—"I can take the oss werry safely, your onor."

"Take him, then, and good evening; but don't get on, for your life."

"Oh, no, sir; I never gets on: 'taint in my ways."

And Beck slowly led the horse through the crowd, till he vanished from Percival's eyes.

Just then, a man passing through the street, paused as he saw the young gentleman on the steps of the club, and said, gaily, "Ah; how do you do? Pretty faces in plenty out to-night! Which way are you going?"

"That is more than I can tell you, Mr. Varney. I was just thinking which turn to take —the right or the left."

"Then let me be your guide," and Varney offered his arm.

Percival accepted the courtesy; and the two walked on towards Picadilly. Many a kind glance from the milliners and maid-servants, whom the illuminations drew abroad, roved, somewhat impartially, towards St. John and his companion; but they dwelt longer on the last, for *there*, at least, they were sure of a return. Varney, if not in his first youth, was still in the prime of life; and Time had dealt with him so leniently, that he retained all the personal advantages of youth itself. His complexion still was clear; and as only his upper lip, decorated with a slight, silken, and well-trimmed moustache, was unshaven, the contour of the face added to the juvenility of his appearance by the rounded symmetry it betrayed. His hair escaped from his hat in fair unchanged luxuriance. And the nervous figure, agile as a panther's, though broad-shouldered and deep-chested, denoted, all the slightness and elasticity of twenty-five, combined with the muscular power of forty. His dress was rather fanastic—too showy for the good taste which is habitual to the English gentleman—and there was a peculiarity in his gait almost approaching to a strut, which bespoke a desire of effect—a consciousness of personal advantages—equally opposed to the mien and manner of Percival's usual companions; yet withal even the most fastidious would have hesitated to apply to Gabriel Varney the epithet of 'vulgar.' Many turned to look again; but it was not to remark the dress, or the slight swagger:—an expression of reckless, sinister power in the countenance—something of vigor and determination even in that very walk, foppish as it would have been in most, made you sink all observation of the mere externals, in a sentiment of curiosity towards the man himself. He seemed a somebody—not a somebody of conventional rank, but a somebody of personal individuality—an artist perhaps, a poet, or a soldier in some foreign service, but certainly a man whose name you would expect to have heard of. Amongst the common mob of passengers he stood out in marked and distinct relief.

"I feel at home in a crowd," said Varney. "Do you understand me?"

"I think so," answered Percival. "If ever I could become distinguished, I, too, should feel at home in a crowd."

"You have ambition, then? you mean to become distinguished?" asked Varney, with a sharp, searching look.

There was a deeper and steadier flash than usual from Percival's dark eyes, and a manlier glow over his cheek, at Varney's question. But he was slow in answering; and when he did so, his manner had all its wonted mixture of graceful bashfulness and gay candor.

"Our rise does not always depend on ourselves. We are not all born great, nor do we all have 'greatness thrust on us.'"

"One can be what one likes, with your fortune," said Varney; and there was a growl of envy in his voice.

"What, be a painter like you! Ha, ha!"

"Faith," said Varney, "at least, if you could paint at all, you would have what I have not,—praise and fame."

Percival pressed kindly on Varney's arm. "Courage you will get justice some day!"

Varney shook his head. "Bah! there is no such thing as justice; all are underrated or overrated. Can you name one man whom you think is estimated by the public at his precise value? As for present popularity, it depends on two qualities—each singly or both united—cowardice and charlatanism; that is, servile compliance with the taste and opinion of the moment, or a quack's spasmodic efforts at originality. But why bore you on such matters! There are things more attractive round us. A good ankle that, eh? Why, pardon me, it is strange; but you don't seem to care much for women?"

"Oh, yes, I do," said Percival, with a sly demureness. 'I am very fond of—my mother!"

"Very proper and filial," said Varney, laughing, "and does your love for the sex stop there?"

"Well, and in truth I fancy so—pretty nearly. You know my grandmother is not alive! But *that* is something really worth looking at!" And Percival pointed, almost with a child's delight, at an illumination more brilliant than the rest.

"I suppose, when you come of age, you will have all the cedars at Laughton hung with colored lamps. Ah, you must ask me there, some day. I should so like to see the old place again."

"You never saw it, I think you say, in my poor father's time?"

"Never."

"Yet you knew him."

"But slightly."

"And you never saw my mother!"

"No; but she seems to have such influence over you, that I am sure she must be a very superior person—rather proud, I suppose."

"Proud—no; that is, not exactly proud, for she is very meek and very affable. But yet——"

"But yet—you hesitate—she would not like you to be seen, perhaps, walking in Piccadilly with Gabriel Varney, the natural son of old Sir Miles's librarian,—Gabriel Varney the painter—Gabriel Varney the adventurer!"

"As long as Gabriel Varney is a man without stain on his character and honor, my mother would only be pleased that I should know an able and accomplished person, whatever his origin or parentage. But my mother would be sad if she knew me intimate with a Bourbon or a Raffaelle, the first in rank or the first in genius, if either prince or artist had lost or even sullied his 'scutcheon of gentleman. In a word, she is most sensitive as to honor and conscience—all else she disregards."

"Hem!" Varney stooped down, as if examining the polish of his boot, while he continued, carelessly—"Impossible to walk the streets and keep one's boots out of the mire! Well—and you agree with your mother?"

"It would be strange if I did not. When I was scarcely four years old, my poor father used to lead me through the long picture-gallery at Laughton, and say, 'Walk through life as if those brave gentlemen looked down on you.' And," added St. John, with his ingenuous smile—"my mother would put in her word—'And those unstained women, too, my Percival!'"

There was something noble and touching in the boy's low accents as he said this; it gave the key to his unusual modesty, and his frank, healthful innocence of character.

The devil in Varney's lip sneered mockingly.

"My young friend, you have never loved yet.—Do you think you ever shall?"

"I have dreamed that I could love one day. But I can wait."

Varney was about to reply, when he was accosted abruptly by three men of that exaggerated style of dress and manner, which is implied by the vulgar appellation of 'Tigrish.' Each of the three men had a cigar in his mouth—each seemed flushed with wine. One wore long brass spurs, and immense moustaches; another was distinguished by an enormous surface of black satin cravat, across which meandered a Pactolus of gold chain; a third had his coat laced and braided, *à la Polonaise*, and pinched and padded *à la Russe*, with trousers shaped to the calf of a sinewy leg, and a glass screwed into his right eye."

"Ah, Grabriel!—ah, Varney!—ah, prince of good fellows, well met! You sup with us to-night at little *Céleste's* we were just going in search of you."

"Who's your friend—one of us?" whispered a second.

And the third screwed his arm tight and lovingly into Varney's.

Gabriel, despite his habitual assurance, looked abashed for a moment, and would have extricated himself from cordialities not at that moment welcome; but he saw that his friends were too far gone in their cups to be easily shaken off, and he felt relieved when Percival, after a dissatisfied glance at the three, said, quietly—"I must detain you no longer—I shall soon look in at your studio;" and without waiting for answer, slid off and was lost among the crowd.

Varney walked on with his new found friends, unheeding for some moments their loose remarks and familiar banter. At length he shook off his abstraction, and surrendering himself to the coarse humors of his companions, soon eclipsed them all by the gusto of his slang and the mocking profligacy of his

sentiments; for here he no longer played a part, or suppressed his grosser instincts. That uncurbed dominion of the senses, to which his very boyhood had abandoned itself, found a willing slave in the man. Even the talents themselves that he displayed came from the cultivation of the sensual. His eye, studying externals, made him a painter—his ear, quick and practised, a musician. His wild, prodigal fancy rioted on every excitement, and brought him in a vast harvest of experience in knowledge of the frailties and the vices on which it indulged its vagrant experiments.

Men who over-cultivate the art that connects itself with the senses, with little counterpoise from the reason and pure intellect, are apt to be dissipated and irregular in their lives. This is frequently noticeable in the biographies of musicians, singers, and painters. less so in poets, because he who deals with words, not signs and tones, must perpetually compare his senses with the pure images of which the senses only see the appearances; in a word, he must employ his intellect, and his self-education must be large and comprehensive. But with most real genius, however fed merely by the senses—most really great painters, singers, and musicians, however easily led astray into temptation, the richness of the soil throws up abundant good qualities to countervail or redeem the evil—they are usually compassionate, generous, sympathizing. That Varney had not such beauties of soul and temperament it is unnecessary to add—principally, it is true, because of his nurture, education, parental example, the utter corruption in which his childhood and youth had passed—partly because he had no *real* genius; it was a false apparition of the divine spirit, reflected from the exquisite perfection of his frame, (which rendered all his senses so vigorous and acute), and his riotous fancy, and his fitful energy, which was capable at times of great application, but not of definite purpose or earnest study.

All about him was flashy and hollow. He had not the natural subtlety and depth of mind that had characterized his terrible father. The graft of the opera dancer was visible on the stock of the scholar; wholly without the habits of method and order, without the patience, without the mathematical, calculating brain of Dalibard, he played wantonly with the horrible and loathsome wickedness of which Olivier had made dark and solemn study. Extravagant and lavish, he spent money as fast as he gained it; he threw away all chances of eminence and career. In the midst of the direst plots of his villany, or the most energetic pursuit of his art, the poorest excitement, the veriest bauble would draw him aside. His heart was with Falri in the sty, his fancy with Aladdin in the palace. To make a show was his darling object; he loved to create effect by his person, his talk, his dress, as well as by his talents. Living from hand to mouth, crimes through which it is not our intention to follow him, had at times made him rich to-day, for vices to make him poor again to-morrow. What he called "luck," or "his star," had favored him—he *was not hanged!*—he lived; and, as the greater part of his unscrupulous career had been conducted in foreign lands, and under other names,—in his own name, and in his own country, though something scarcely to be defined, but equivocal and provocative of suspicion, made him displeasing to the prudent, and vaguely alarmed the experience of the sober,—still no positive accusation was attached to the general integrity of his character; and the mere dissipation of his habits was naturally little known out of his familiar circle. Hence, he had the most presumptuous confidence in himself—a confidence native to his courage, and confirmed by his experience. His conscience was so utterly obtuse, that he might almost be said to present the phenomenon of a man *without* conscience at all. Unlike Conrad, he did not "know himself a villain;" all that he knew of himself was, that he was a remarkably clever fellow, without prejudice or superstition. That, with all his gifts, he had not succeeded better in life, he ascribed carelessly to the surpassing wisdom or his philosophy. He could have done better if he had enjoyed himself less—but was not enjoyment that be all and end all of this little life?

More often, indeed, in the moods of his bitter envy, he would lay the fault upon the world. How great he could have been if he had been rich and high born! Oh, he was made to spend, not to save—to command, not to fawn! He was not formed to plod through the dull mediocrities of fortune; he must toss up for All or the Nothing! It was no control

over himself that made Varney now turn his thoughts from certain grave designs on Percival St. John, to the brutal debauchery of his three companions,—rather he then yielded most to his natural self. And when the morning star rose over the night he passed with low profligates and venal nymphs,—when, over the fragments on the board and emptied bottles, and drunken riot, dawn gleamed and saw him in all the pride of his magnificent organization, and the cynicism of his measured vice;—fair, fresh, and blooming amidst those maudlin eyes, and flushed cheeks, and reeling figures;—laughing hideously over the spectacle he had provoked, and kicking aside, with a devil's scorn, the prostrate form of the favored partner whose head had rested on his bosom, as alone with a steady step he passed the threshold, and walked into the fresh, healthful air;—Gabriel Varney enjoyed the fell triumph of his hell-born vanity, and revelled in his sentiment of superiority and power.

Meanwhile, on quitting Varney, young Percival strolled on as the whim directed him. Turning down the Haymarket, he gained the colonnade of the Opera House. The crowd there was so dense that his footsteps were arrested, and he leant against one of the columns in admiration of the various galaxies in view.

In front blazed the rival stars of the United Service Club and the Athenæum;—to the left, the quaint and peculiar device which lighted up the Northumberland House;—to the right, the anchors, cannons, and bombs, which typified ingeniously the martial attributes of the Ordnance Office.

At that moment there were three persons connected with this narrative within a few feet of each other, distinguished from the multitude by the feelings with which each regarded the scene and felt the jostle of the crowd. Percival St. John, in whom the harmless sense of pleasure was yet vivid and unsatiated, caught from the assemblage only that physical hilarity which heightened his own spirits. If in a character as yet so undeveloped—to which the large passions and stern ends of life were as yet unknown—stirred some deeper and more musing thoughts and speculations, giving gravity to the habitual smile on his rosy lip, and steadying the play of his sparkling eyes, he would have been at a loss himself to explain the dim sentiment, and the vague desire.

Screened by another column from the pressure of the mob, with his arms folded on his breast, a man some few years older in point of time—many years older in point of character—gazed (with thoughts how turbulent—with ambition how profound?) upon the dense and dark masses that covered space and street far as the eye could reach. He, indeed, could not have said, with Varney, that he was "at home in crowd." For a crowd did not fill him with the sense of his own individual being and importance, but grappled him to its mighty breast with the thousand tissues of a common destiny. Who shall explain and disentangle those high, and restless, and interwoven emotions with which intellectual ambition, honorable and ardent, gazes upon that solemn thing with which, in which, for which it lives and labors—the Human Multitude? To that abstracted, solitary man, the illumination, the festivity, the curiosity, the holiday, were nothing, or but as fleeting phantoms and vain seemings. In his heart's eye, he saw before him but the PEOPLE, the shadow of an everlasting audience—audience at once and judge.

And literally touching him as he stood, the ragged sweeper, who had returned in vain to devote a last care to his beloved charge, stood arrested with the rest, gazing joylessly on the blazing lamps, dead as the stones he heeded, to the young vivacity of the one man, the solemn visions of the other. So, O London, amidst the universal holiday to monarch and to mob, in those three souls lived the three elements, which, duly mingled and administered, make thy vice and thy virtue—thy glory and thy shame—thy labor and thy luxury; pervading the palace and the street—the hospital and the prison;—enjoyment, which is pleasure—energy, which is action—torpor which is want!

CHAPTER II.

Love at first sight.

SUDDENLY across the gaze of Percival St. John there flashed a face that woke him from his abstraction, as a light awakes the sleeper

It was as a recognition of something seen dimly before—a truth coming out from a dream. It was not the mere beauty of that face (and beautiful it was), that arrested his eye and made his heart beat more quickly—it was rather that nameless and inexplicable sympathy which constitutes love at first sight;—a sort of impulse and instinct common to the dullest as the quickest—the hardest reason as the liveliest fancy. Plain Cobbett, seeing before the cottage door, at her homeliest of house work, the girl of whom he said—"That girl should be my wife;" and Dante, first thrilled by the vision of Beatrice, are alike true types of a common experience: Whatever of love sinks the deepest is felt at first sight; it streams on us abrupt from the cloud, a lightning flash —a destiny revealed to us face to face.

Now, there was nothing poetical in the place or the circumstance, still less in the companionship in which this fair creature startled the virgin heart of that careless boy; she was leaning on the arm of a stout, rosy-faced matron in a puce-colored gown, who was flanked on the other side by a very small, very spare man, with a very wee face, the lower part of which was enveloped in an immense belcher. Besides these two incumbrances, the stout lady contrived to carry in her hands an umbrella, a basket, and a pair of pattens.

In the midst of the strange, unfamiliar emotion which his eye conveyed to his heart, Percival's ear was displeasingly jarred by the loud, bluff, hearty voice of the girl's female companion—

"Gracious me! if that is not John Ardworth; who'd have thought it! Why, John—I say, John!" and lifting her umbrella horizontally, she poked aside two city clerks in front of her, wheeled round the little man on her left, upon whom the clerks simultaneously bestowed the appellation of "feller," and driving him, as being the sharpest and thinnest wedge at hand, though a dense knot of some half-a-dozen gapers, while following his involuntary progress she looked defiance on the malcontents, she succeeded in clearing her way to the spot where stood the young man she had discovered. The ambitious dreamer, for it was he, thus detected and disturbed, looked embarrassed for a moment, as the stout lady, touching him with the umbrella, said,

"Well, I declare, if this is not too bad! You sent word that you should not be able to come out with us to see the 'luminations, and here you are as large as life!"

"I did not think at the moment you wrote to me, that——"

"Oh, stuff!" interrupted the stout woman, with a significant, good-humored shake of her head, "I know what's what; tell the truth, and shame the gentleman who objects to showing his feet. You are a wild fellow, John Ardworth—you are! you like looking after the pretty faces—you do—you do—ha, ha, ha! very natural! So did you once—did not you, Mr. Mivers—did not you, eh? men must be men—they always are men, and its my belief that men they always *will* be!"

With this sage conjecture into the future, the lady turned to Mr. Mivers, who, thus appealed to, extricated with some difficulty his chin from the folds of his belcher, and putting up his small face, said, in a small voice, "Yes, I was a wild fellow once, but you have tamed me! you have, Mrs. M."

And therewith the chin sunk again into the belcher, and the small voice died into a small sigh.

The stout lady glanced benignly at her spouse, and then resuming her address, to which Ardworth listened with a half frown and a half smile, observed, encouragingly—

"Yes, there's nothing like a lawful wife, to break a man in, as you will find some day. Howsomever, your time's not come for the Altar, so suppose you give Helen your arm, and come with us."

"Do," said Helen, in a sweet, coaxing voice.

Ardworth bent down his rough, earnest face to Helen's, and an evident pleasure relaxed its thoughtful lines. "I cannot resist you," he began, and then he paused and frowned "Pish," he added, I was talking folly; but what head would not you turn? Resist you I must, for I am on my way now to my drudgery. Ask me anything, some years hence when I have time to be happy, and then see if I am the bear you now call me."

"Well," said Mrs. Mivers, emphatically, "are you coming, or are you not? Don't stand there, shilly-shally."

"Mrs. Mivers," returned Ardworth, with a kind of sly humor, "I am sure you would be very angry with your husband's excellent

shopmen, if that was the way they spoke to your customers. If some unhappy dropper-in—some lady who came to buy a yard or so of Irish, was suddenly dazzled, as I am, by a luxury wholly unforeseen and eagerly coveted —a splendid lace veil, or a ravishing cashmere, or whatever else you ladies desiderate, and while she was balancing between prudence and temptation, your foreman exclaimed—'Don't stand shilly-shally,'—come, I put it to you."

"Stuff!" said Mrs. Mivers.

"Alas! unlike your imaginary customer—(I hope so, at least, for the sake of your till) —prudence gets the better of me; "unless," added Ardworth, irresolutely, and glancing at Helen—"unless, indeed, you are not sufficiently protected, and——"

"Purtected!" exclaimed Mrs. Mivers, in an indignant tone of astonishment, and agitating the formidable umbrella, "as if I was not enough, with the help of this here domestic commodity, to purtect a dozen such. Purtected, indeed!"

"John is right, Mrs. M.; business is business," said Mr. Mivers. "Let us move on—we stop the way, and those idle lads are listening to us, and sniggering."

"Sniggering!" exclaimed the gentle helpmate; "I should like to see those who presume for to snigger;" and as she spoke she threw a look of defiance around her. Then, having satisfied her resentment, she thus prepared to obey, as no doubt she always did, her lord and master. Suddenly, with a practised movement, she wheeled round Mr. Mivers, and taking care to protrude before him the sharp point of the umbrella, cut her way through the crowd like the scythed car of the ancient Britons, and was soon lost amidst the throng, although her way might be guessed by a slight ripple of peculiar agitation along the general stream, accompanied by a prolonged murmur of reproach or expostulation which gradually died in the distance.

Ardworth gazed after the fair form of Helen with a look of regret; and, when it vanished, —with a slight start and a suppressed sigh, he turned away, and with the long, steady stride of a strong man, cleared his path through the Strand, towards the printing-office of a journal on which he was responsibly engaged.

But Percival, who had caught much of the conversation that took place so near him—Percival, happy child of idleness and whim, had no motive of labor and occupation to stay the free impulse of his heart, and his heart drew him on, with magnetic attraction, in the track of the first being that had ever touched the sweet instincts of youth.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Mivers was destined to learn—though, perhaps, the lesson little availed her—that to get smoothly through this world it is necessary to be supple as well as strong; and though, up to a certain point, man or woman may force the way by poking umbrellas into people's ribs, and treading mercilessly upon people's toes, yet the endurance of ribs and toes has its appointed limits.

Helen, half terrified, also half amused by her companion's robust resolution of purpose, had in Mrs. Mivers' general courage and success that confidence which the weak repose in the strong, and though, whenever she turned her eyes from the illuminations, she besought Mrs. Mivers to be more gentle, yet, seeing that they had gone safely from St. Paul's to St. James's, she had no distinct apprehension of any practically ill resuits from the energies she was unable to mitigate. But now, having just gained the end of St. James's Street, Mrs. Mivers at last found her match. The crowd here halted, thick and serried, to gaze in peace upon the brilliant vista which the shops and clubs of that street presented. Coaches and carriages had paused in their line, and immediately before Mrs. Mivers stood three very thin, small women, whose dress bespoke them to be of the humblest class.

"Make way, there—make way, my good women, make way!" cried Mrs. Mivers, equally disdainful of the size and the rank of the obstructing parties.

"Arrah, and what shall we make way for the like of you, you ould busy body?" said one of the dames, turning round, and presenting a very formidable squint to the broad optics of Mrs. Mivers.

Without deigning a reply, Mrs. Mivers had recourse to her usual tactics. Umbrella and husband went right between two of the feminine obstructives; and to the inconceivable astonishment and horror of the assailant, husband and umbrella instantly vanished. The three small furies had pounced upon both. They were torn from their natural owner—

they were hurried away; the stream behind, long fretted at the path so abruptly made amidst it, closed in, joyous with a thousand waves. Mrs. Mivers and Helen were borne forward in one way, the umbrella and the husband in the other; at the distance a small voice was heard—"Don't you!—don't! Be quiet! Mrs.—Mrs. M.! Oh! oh! Mrs. M.!" At that last repetition of the beloved and familiar initial, uttered in a tone of almost superhuman anguish, the conjugal heart of Mrs. Mivers was afflicted beyond control.

"Wait here a moment, my dear! I'll just give it them—that's all!" And in another moment Mrs. Mivers was heard bustling, scolding, till all trace of her whereabout was gone from the eyes of Helen. Thus left alone, in exceeding shame and dismay, the poor girl cast a glance around. The glance was caught by two young men, whose station, in these days when dress is an equivocal designator of rank, could not be guessed by their exterior. They might be dandies from the west—they might be clerks from the east.

"By Jove,' exclaimed one, "that's a sweet pretty girl!" and, by a sudden movement of the crowd, they both found themselves close to Helen.

"Are you alone, my dear?" said a voice rudely familiar.

Helen made no reply—the tone of the voice frightened her. A gap in the mob showed the space towards Cleveland Row, which, leading to no illuminations, was vacant and solltary. She instantly made towards the spot; the two men followed her,—the bolder and elder one occasionally trying to catch hold of her arm. At last, as she passed the last house to the left, a house then owned by One who, at once far-sighted and impetuous, affable and haughty —characterized alike by solid virtues and brilliant faults—would, but for hollow friends, have triumphed over countless foes, and enjoyed at last that brief day of stormy power for which statesmen resign the heath of manhood and the hope of age—as she passed that memorable mansion, she suddenly perceived that the space before her had no thoroughfare, and, while she paused in dismay, her pursuers blockaded her escape.

One of them now fairly seized her hand: "Nay, pretty one, why so cruel? But one kiss—only one!" He endeavored to pass his arm round her waist while he spoke. Helen eluded him, and darted forward, to find her way stopped by her persecutor's companion, when, to her astonishment, a third person gently pushed aside the form that impeded her path, approached, and looking mute defiance at the unchivalric molesters, offered her his arm. Helen gave but one timid hurrying glance to her unexpected protector: something in his face, his air, his youth, appealed at once to her confidence. Mechanically, and scarce knowing what she did, she laid her trembling hand on the arm held out to her.

The two Lotharios looked foolish. One pulled up his shirt collar, the other turned, with a forced laugh, on his heel. Boy as Percival seemed, and little more than boy as he was, there was a dangerous fire in his eye, and an expression of spirit and ready courage in his whole countenance, which, if it did not awe his tall rivals, made them at least unwilling to have a scene, and provoke the interference of the policeman, one of whom was now seen walking slowly up to the spot. They, therefore, preserved a discomfited silence; and Percival St. John, with his heart going ten knots a beat, sailed triumphantly off with his prize.

Scarcely knowing whither he went, certainly forgetful of Mr. Mivers, in his anxiety to escape at least from the crowd, Percival walked on till he found himself with his fair charge under the trees of St. James's Park.

Then Helen, recovering herself, paused, and said, alarmed, "But this is not my way—I must go back to the street!"

"How foolish I am—that is true!" said Percival, looking confused. "I—I felt so happy to be with you, feel your hand on my arm, and think that we were all by ourselves, that — that — but you have dropped your flowers!"

And as a bouquet Helen wore, dislodged somehow or other, fell to the ground, both stooped to pick it up, and their hands met. At that touch, Percival felt a strange tremble, which perhaps communicated itself (for such things are contagious) to his fair companion. Percival had got the nosegay, and seemed willing to detain it, for he bent his face lingeringly over the flowers. At length, he turned his bright ingenuous eyes to Helen, and singling one rose from the rest, said be-

seechingly—"May I keep this? See, it is not so fresh as the others."

"I am sure, sir," said Helen, coloring, and looking down, "I owe you so much that I should be glad if a poor flower could repay it."

"A poor flower! You don't know what a prize this is to me!"

Percival placed the rose reverently in his bosom, and the two moved back slowly, as if reluctant both, through the old palace court into the street.

"Is that lady related to you?" asked Percival, looking another way, and dreading the reply: "Not your mother, surely!"

"Oh, no!—I have no mother!"

"Forgive me!" said Percival, for the tone of Helen's voice told him that he had touched the spring of a household sorrow. "And," he added, with a jealousy that he could scarcely restrain from making itself evident in his accent, "that gentlemen who spoke to you under the Colonnade,—I have seen him before, but where I cannot remember. In fact, you have put everything but yourself out of my head. Is he related to you?"

"He is my cousin."

"Cousin!" repeated Percival, pouting a little; and again there was silence.

"I don't now how it is," said Percival, at last, and very gravely, as if much perplexed by some abstruse thought, "but I feel as if I had known you all my life. I never felt this for any one before."

There was something so irresistibly innocent in the boy's serious, wondering tone, as he said these words, that a smile, in spite of herself, broke out amongst the thousand dimples round Helen's charming lips. Perhaps the little witch felt a touch of coquetry for the first time.

Percival, who was looking sidelong into her face, saw the smile, and said, drawing up his head, and shaking back his jetty curls, "I dare say you are laughing at me as a mere boy; but I am older than I look. I am sure I am much older than you are. Let me see, you are seventeen, I suppose?"

Helen, getting more and more at her ease, nodded playful assent.

"And I am not far from twenty-one. Ah! you may well look surprised—but so it is. An hour ago I felt a mere boy; now I shall never feel a boy again!"

Once more there was a long pause, and before it was broken they had gained the very spot in which Helen had lost her friend.

"Why, bless us, and save us!" exclaimed a voice 'loud as a trumpet,' but not 'with a silver sound,' "there you are, after all;" and Mrs. Mivers (husband and umbrella both regained) planted herself full before them.

"Oh, a pretty fright I have been in; and now to see you coming along as cool as if nothing had happened—as if the umbrella had not lost its hivory andle—it's quite purvoking. Dear, dear! what we have gone through! And who is this young gentleman, pray?"

Helen whispered some hesitating explanation, which Mrs. Mivers did not seem to receive as graciously as Percival, poor fellow, had a right to expect. She stared him full in the face, and shook her head suspiciously when she saw him a little confused by the survey. Then, tucking Helen tightly under her arm, she walked back towords the Haymarket, merely saying to Percival—

"Much obligated, and good night. I have a long journey to take to set down this here young lady, and the best thing we can all do is to get home as fast we can, and have a refreshing cup of tea—that's my mind, sir. Excuse *me!*"

Thus abruptly dismissed, poor Percival gazed wistfully on his Helen, as she was borne along, and was somewhat comforted at seeing her look back, with (as he thought) a touch of regret in her parting smile. Then suddenly it flashed across him how sadly he had wasted his time. Novice that he was, he had not even learned the name and address of his new acquaintance. At that thought he hurried on through the crowd, but only reached the object of his pursuit just in time to see her placed in a coach, and to catch a full view of the luxuriant proportions of Mrs. Mivers as she followed her into the vehecle.

As the lumbering conveyance (the only coach on the stand) heaved itself into motion, Percival's eye fell on the sweeper, who was still leaning on his broom, and who, in grateful recognition of the unwonted generosity that had repaid his service, touched his ragged hat, and smiled drowsily on his young customer. Love sharpens the wit, and animates the timid;—a thought worthy of the most experienced, inspired Percival St. John: he hurried to the

sweeper, laid his hand on his patchwork coat, and said, breathlessly—

"You see that coach turning into the square; follow it—find out where it sets down. There's a sovereign for you—another if you succeed. Call and tell me your success. Number —— Curzon-street !—off, like a shot !"

The sweeper nodded and grinned; it was possibly not his first commission of a similar kind. He darted down the street; and Percival, following him with equal speed, had the satisfaction to see him, as the coach traversed St. James's square, comfortably seated on the the footboard.

Beck, dull clod, knew nothing, cared nothing, felt nothing as to the motives or purpose of his employer. Honest love or selfish vice, it was the same to him. He saw only the one sovereign which, with astounded, he still gazed at on his palm, and the vision of the sovereign that was yet to come:

> "Scandit æratas vitiosa naves
> Cura: nec turmas equitum relinquit."

It was the Selfishness of London—calm and stolid, whether on the track of innocence or at the command of guile.

At half-past ten o'clock, Percival St. John was seated in his room, and the sweeper stood at the threshold. Wealth and penury seemed brought into visible contact in the persons of the visitor and the host. The dwelling is held by some to give an index to the character of the owner: if so, Percival's apartments differed much from those generally favored by young men of rank and fortune. On the one hand it had none of that affectation of superior taste, evinced in marqueterie and gilding, or the more picturesque discomfort of high backed chairs and mediæval curiosities which prevails in the dainter abodes of fastidious bachelors. Nor, on the other hand, had it the sporting character which individualizes the ruder juveniles '*qui gaudent equis*,' betrayed by engravings of racers, and celebrated fox-hunts, relieved, perhaps, if the Nimrod condescend to a cross of the Lovelace, with portraits of *figurantes*, and ideals of French sentiment, entitled "*Le Soir*," or "*La Reveillée*," "*L'Espoir*," or "*L'Abandon*." But the rooms had a physiognomy of their own, from their exquisite neatness and cheerful simplicity. The chintz draperies were lively with gay flowers; books filled up the niches; here and there were small pictures, chiefly sea-pieces—well chosen, well placed. There might, indeed, have been something almost effeminate in a certain inexpressible purity of taste, and a cleanliness of detail that seemed actually brilliant, had not the folding-doors allowed a glimpse of a plainer apartment, with fencing foils and boxing-gloves, ranged on the wall, and a cricket-bat resting carelessly in the corner. These gave a redeeming air of manliness to the rooms, but it was the manliness of a boy; half girl, if you please, in the purity of thought that pervaded one room, all boy in the playful pursuits that were made manifest in the other. Simple, however, as this abode really was, poor Beck had never been admitted to the sight of anything half so fine. He stood at the door for a moment, and stared about him, bewildered and dazzled. But his natural torpor to things that concerned him not, soon brought to him the same stoicism that philosophy gives the strong; and after the first surprise, his eye quietly settled on his employer. St. John rose eagerly from the sofa, on which he had been contemplating the starlit tree-tops of Chesterfield Gardens—

"Well, well ?" said Percival.

"*H*old Brompton," said Beck, with a brevity of word and clearness of perception worthy a Spartan.

"Old Brompton ?" repeated Percival, thinking the reply the most natural in the world.

"In a big ous by hisself," continued Beck, "with a igh vall in front."

"You would know it again ?"

"In course; he's so wery pecular."

"He ? who ?"

"Vy, the ous. The young lady got out, and the hold folks driv back. I did not go arter *them !*" and Beck looked sly.

"So;—I must find out the name."

"I axed at the public," said Beck, proud of his diplomacy. "They keeps a sarvant vot takes half a pint at her meals. The young lady's ma be a forîner."

"A foreigner ! Then she lives there with her mother ?"

"So they 'spose at the public."

"And the name ?"

Beck shook his head, "'Tis a French un, your onor; but the sarvan's is Martha."

"You must meet me at Brompton, near

the turnpike, to-morrow, and show me the house."

"Vy, I's in bizness all day, please your onor."

"In business?"

"I's the place of the crossing," said Beck, with much dignity; "but arter eight I goes vhere I likes."

"To-morrow evening, then, at half-past eight, by the turnpike."

Beck pulled his forelock assentingly.

"There's the sovereign I promised you, my poor fellow—much good may it do you. Perhaps you have some father or mother whose heart it will glad."

"I never had no such thing," replied Beck, turning the coin in his hand.

"Well, don't spend it in drink."

"I never drinks nothing but svipes."

"Then," said Percival, laughingly, "what, my good friend, will you ever do with your money?"

Beck put his finger to his nose, sunk his voice into a whisper, and replied, solemnly—"I as a mattris."

"A mistress," said Percival; "oh, a sweetheart! Well; but if she's a good girl, and loves you, she'll not let you spend your money on her."

"I haint such a ninny as that," said Beck, with majestic contempt. "I 'spises the flat that is done brown by the blowens. I as a mattris."

"A mattress! a mattress! Well, what has that to do with the money?"

"Vy, I lines it."

Percival looked puzzled. "Oh," said he, after a thoughtful pause, and in a tone of considerable compassion, "I understand; you sew your money in your mattress. My poor, poor lad, you can do better than that!—there are the savings banks."

Beck looked frightened: "I opes your onor vont tell no vun. I opes no vun vont go for to put my tin vere I shall know nothing vatsomever about it. Now, I knows vere it is—and I lays on it."

"Do you sleep more soundly when you lie on your treasure?"

"No; it's hodd," said Beck, musingly, "but the more I lines it the vorse I sleeps."

Percival laughed; but there was melancholy in his laughter; something in the forlorn, benighted, fatherless, squalid miser, went to the core of his open, generous heart.

"Do you ever read your Bible?" said he after a pause; "—or even the newspaper?"

"I does not read nothing, cos vy, I haint been made a scholloard, like swell Tim, as was lagged for a forgery."

"You go to church on a Sunday?"

"Yes; I 'as a veekly hingagement at the New Road."

"What do you mean?"

"To see arter the gig of a gemman vot comes from Ighgate."

Percival lifted his brillant eyes, and they were moistened with a heavenly dew, on the dull face of his fellow-creature. Beck made a scrape, looked round, shambled back to the door, and ran home, through the lamp-lit streets of the great mart of the Christian universe, to sew the gold in his mattress.

CHAPTER III.

Early Training for an Upright Gentleman.

PERCIVAL ST. JOHN had been brought up at home under the eye of his mother and the care of an excellent man, who had been tutor to himself and his brothers. The tutor was not much of a classical scholar, for in great measure, he had educated himself; and he who does so, usually lacks the polish and brilliancy of one whose footsteps have been led early to the Temple of the Muses. In fact, Captain Greville was a gallant soldier, with whom Vernon St. John had been acquainted in his own brief military career, and whom circumstances had so reduced in life as to compel him to sell his commission, and live as he could. He had always been known in his regiment as a reading man, and his authority looked up to in all the disputes as to history and dates, and literary anecdotes, which might occur at the mess-table. Vernon considered him the most learned man of his acquaintance; and, when accidentally meeting him in London, he learned his fallen fortunes, he congratulated himself on a very brilliant idea, when he suggested that Captain Greville should assist him in the education of his boys and the management of his estate.

At first, all that Greville modestly undertook, with respect to the former, and, indeed, was expected to do, was to prepare the young gentleman for Eton, to which Vernon, with the natural predilection of an Eton man, destined his sons. But the sickly constitutions of the two elder justified Lady Mary in her opposition to a public school; and Percival conceived early so strong an affection for a sailor's life, that the father's intentions were frustrated. The two elder continued their education at home; and Percival, at an earlier age than usual, went to sea. The last was fortunate enough to have for his captain one of that new race of naval officers who, well educated and accomplished, form a notable contrast to the old heroes of Smollet. Percival, however, had not been long in the service before the deaths of his two elder brothers, preceded by that of his father, made him the head of his ancient house, and the sole prop of his mother's earthly hopes. He conquered with a generous effort the passion for his noble profession, which service had but confirmed, and returned home with his fresh child-like nature uncorrupted, his constitution strengthened, his lively and impressionable mind braced by the experience of danger and the habits of duty, and quietly resumed his reading under Captain Greville, who had moved from the hall to a small house in the village.

Now, the education he had received, from first to last, was less adapted prematurely to quicken his intellect and excite his imagination than to warm his heart and elevate, while it chastened, his moral qualities; for in Lady Mary there was, amidst singular sweetness of temper, a high cast of character and thought. She was not what is commonly called clever, and her experience of the world was limited, compared to that of most women of similar rank who pass their lives in the vast theatre of London. But she became superior by a certain single-heartedness which made truth so habitual to her, that the light in which she lived rendered all objects around her clear. One who is always true in the great duties of life, is nearly always wise. And Vernon, when he had fairly buried his faults, had felt a noble shame for the excesses into which they had led him. Gradually more and more wedded to his home, he dropped his old companions. He set grave guard on his talk (his *habits* now required no guard), lest any of the ancient levity should taint the ears of his children. Nothing is more common in parents than their desire that their children should escape their faults. We scarcely know ourselves till we have children, and then, if we love them duly, we look narrowly into failings that become vices, when they serve as examples to the young.

The inborn gentleman with the native courage, and spirit, and horror of trick and falsehood which belong to that chivalrous abstraction, survived almost alone in Vernon St. John; and his boys sprang up in the atmosphere of generous sentiments and transparent truth. The tutor was in harmony with the parents—a soldier every inch of him—not a mere disciplinarian, yet with a profound sense of duty and a knowledge that duty is to be found in attention to details. In inculcating the habit of subordination so graceful to the young, he knew how to make himself beloved and what is harder still, to be understood. The soul of this poor soldier was white and unstained, as the arms of a maiden knight; it was full of suppressed, but lofty enthusiasm. He had been ill-used, whether by Fate or the Horse Guards—his career had been a failure, but he was as loyal as if his hand held the field-marshal's truncheon and the garter bound his knee. He was above all querulous discontent. From him, no less than from his parents, Percival caught not only a spirit of honor worthy the *antiqua fides* of the poets, but that peculiar cleanliness of thought, if the expression may be used, which belongs to the ideal of youthful chivalry. In mere book-learning, Percival, as may be supposed, was not very extensively read; but his mind if not, largely stored, had a certain unity of culture which gave it stability and individualized its operations.

Travels, voyages, narratives of heroic adventure, biographies of great men, had made the favorite pasture of his enthusiasm. To this was added the more stirring, and, perhaps, the more genuine order of poets who make you feel and glow, rather than doubt and ponder. He knew, at least, enough of Greek to enjoy old Homer; and if he could have come but ill through a college examination into Æschylus and Sophocles, he had dwelt with delight on the rushing storm of spears, in the

Seven before Thebes, and wept over the heroic calamities of *Antigone*. In science, he was no adept; but his clear, good sense, and quick appreciation of positive truths, had led him easily though the elementary mathematics, and his somewhat martial spirit had made him delight in the old captain's lectures on military tactics. Had he remained in the navy, Percival St. John would, doubtless, have been distinguished. His talents fitted him for straightforward manly action; and he had a generous desire of distinction, vague, perhaps, the moment he was taken from his profession, and curbed by his diffidence in himself and his sense of deficiencies in the ordinary routine of purely classical education. Still he had in him all the elements of a true man—a man to go through life with a firm step and a clear conscience, and a gallant hope. Such a man may not win fame, *that* is an accident; but he must occupy no despicable place in the movement of the world.

It was at first intended to send Percival to Oxford, but for some reason or other, that design was abandoned. Perhaps Lady Mary, over-cautious, as mothers left alone sometimes are,—feared the contagion to which a young man of brilliant expectations, and no studious turn, is necessarily exposed in all places of miscellaneous resort.—So Percival was sent abroad for two years, under the guardianship of Captain Greville. On his return, at the age of nineteen—the great world lay before him, and he longed ardently to enter. For a year Lady Mary's fears and fond anxieties detained him at Laughton; but, though his great tenderness for his mother withheld Percival from opposing her wishes by his own, this interval of inaction affected visibly his health and spirits. Captain Greville, a man of the world, saw the cause sooner than Lady Mary, and one morning, earlier than usual, he walked up to the Hall.

The captain, with all his deference to the sex, was a plain man enough, when business was to be done. Like his great commander, he came to the point in a few words.

"My dear Lady Mary, our boy must go to London—we are killing him here."

"Mr. Greville!" cried Lady Mary, turning pale and putting aside her embroidery—"killing him?"

"Killing the man in him. I don't mean to alarm you—I dare say his lungs are sound enough, and that his heart would bear the sthenoscope to the satisfaction of the College of Surgeons. But, my dear ma'am, Percival is to be a man—it is the man you are killing by keeping him tied to your apron-string."

"Oh, Mr. Greville! I am sure you don't wish to wound me, but——"

"I beg ten thousand pardons. I am rough, but truth is rough sometimes."

"It is not for my sake," said the mother, warmly, and with tears in her eyes, "that I have wished him to be here. If he is dull, can we not, fill the house for him?"

"Fill a thimble, my dear Lady Mary—Percival should have a plunge in the ocean."

"But he is so young yet, that horrid London!—such temptations—fatherless, too!"

"I have no fear of the result if Percival goes now while his principles are strong, and his imagination not inflamed; but if we keep him here much longer against his bent, he will learn to brood and to muse, write bad poetry perhaps, and think the world withheld from him a thousand times more delightful than it is. This very dread of temptation will provoke his curiosity, irritate his fancy, make him imagine the temptation must be a very delightful thing. For the first time in my life, ma'am, I have caught him sighing over fashionable novels, and subscribing to the Southampton Circulating Library. Take my word for it, it is time that Percival should begin life, and swim without corks."

Lady Mary had a profound confidence in Greville's judgment and affection for Percival, and like a sensible woman she was aware of her own weakness. She remained silent for a few moments, and then said, with an effort—

"You know how hateful London is to me now—how unfit I am to return to the hollow forms of its society; still, if you think it right, I will take a house for the season, and Percival can still be under our eye."

"No ma'am, pardon me, that will be the surest way to make him either discontented or hypocritical. A young man of his prospects and temper can hardly be expected to chime in with all our sober, old-fashioned habits. You will impose on him—if he is to conform to our hours, and notions, and quiet set—a thousand irksome restraints; and what will be the consequence? In a year, he will be of age,

and can throw us off altogether, if he pleases. I know the boy:—don't seem to distrust him—he may be trusted. You place the true constraint on temptation, when you say to him, 'We confide to you our dearest treasure—your honor, your morals, your conscience, yourself!"

"But, at least, you will go with him, if it must be so," said Lady Mary, after a few timid arguments, from which, one by one, she was driven.

"I!—what for?—to be a jest of the young puppies he must know—to make him ashamed of himself and me—himself as a milksop, and me as a dry nurse."

"But this was not so abroad!"

"Abroad, ma'am, I gave him full swing, I promise you; and when we went abroad, he was two years younger."

"But he is a mere child, still."

"Child, Lady Mary! At his age, I had gone through two sieges. There are younger faces than his at a mess-room. Come, come! I know what you fear—he may commit some follies; very likely. He may be taken in, and lose some money—he can afford it, and he will get experience in return. Vices he has none. I have seen him—ay, with the vicious. Send him out against the world, like a saint of old, with his Bible in his hand, and no spot on his robe. Let him see fairly what is, not stay here to dream of what is not. And when he's of age, ma'am, we must get him an object—a pursuit;—start him for the county, and make him serve the state; he will understand that business pretty well. Tush! tush! what is there to cry at?"

The Captain prevailed. We don't say that his advice would have been equally judicious for all youths of Percival's age; but he knew well the nature to which he confided; he knew well how strong was that young heart in its healthful simplicity and instintive rectitude; and he appreciated its maniless not too highly when he felt that all evident props and aids would be but irritating tokens of distrust.

And thus, armed only with letters of introduction, his mother's tearful admonitions, and Greville's experienced warnings, Percival St. John was launched into London life. After the first month or so, Greville came up to visit him, do him sundry kind invisible offices amongst his old friends, help him to equip his apartments, and mount his stud; and, wholly satisfied with the results of his experiment, returned in high spirits with flattering reports to the anxious mother.

But, indeed, the tone of Percival's letters would have been sufficient to allay even maternal anxiety. He did not write, as sons are too apt to do, short excuses for not writing more at length, unsatisfactory compressions of details (exciting words of conjecture), into a hurried sentence. Frank and overflowing, those delightful epistles gave accounts fresh from the first impressions of all he saw and did. There was a racy, wholesome gusto in his enjoyment of novelty and independence. His balls and his dinners, and his cricket at *Lord's*—his partners, and his companions; his general gaiety, his occasional *ennui*, furnished ample materials to one who felt he was corresponding with another heart, and had nothing to fear or to conceal.

But about two months before this portion of our narrative opens with the coronation, Lady Mary's favorite sister, who had never married, and who, by the death of her parents, was left alone in the worse than widowhood of of an old maid, had been ordered to Pisa, for a complaint that betrayed pulmonary symptoms; and Lady Mary, with her usual unselfishness, conquered both her aversion to movement and her wish to be in reach of her son, to accompany abroad this beloved and solitary relative. Captain Greville was pressed into service as their joint cavalier. And thus Percival's habitual intercourse with his two principal correspondents received a temporary check.

CHAPTER IV.

John Ardworth.

At noon the next day, Beck, restored to his grandeur, was at the helm of his state; Percival was vainly trying to be amused by the talk of two or three loungers who did him the honor to smoke a cigar in his rooms; and John Ardworth sat in his dingy cell in Gray's Inn, with a pile of law books on the table, and the daily newspapers carpeting a footstool of *Hansard's Debates* upon the floor—no unusual

combination of studies amongst the poorer and more ardent students of the law, who often owe their earliest, nor perhaps their least noble earnings, to employment in the empire of the Press. By the power of a mind habituated to labor, and backed by a frame of remarkable strength and endurance, Ardworth grappled with his arid studies not the less manfully for a night mainly spent in a printer's office, and stinted to less than four hours' actual sleep. But that sleep was profound and refreshing as a peasant's. The nights thus devoted to the Press (he was employed in the sub-editing of a daily journal), the mornings to the law, he kept distinct the two separate callings with a stern subdivision of labor, which in itself proved the vigor of his energy and the resolution of his will.

Early compelled to shift for himself, and carve out his own way, he had obtained a small fellowship at the small college in which he had passed his academic career. Previous to his arrival in London, by contributions to political periodicals, and a high reputation at that noble debating society in Cambridge which has trained some of the most eminent of living public men,* he had established a name which was immediately useful to him in obtaining employment on the Press. Like most young men of practical ability, he was an eager politician. The popular passion of the day kindled his enthusiasm, and stirred the depths of his soul with magnificent, though exaggerated, hopes in the destiny of his race. He identified himself with the people, his stout heart beat loud in thier stormy cause. His compositions, if they wanted that knowledge of men, that subtle comprehension of the true state of parties, that happy *temperance* in which the crowning wisdom of statesmen must consist—qualites which experience alone can give—excited considerable attention by their bold eloquence and hardy logic. They were suited to the time. But John Ardworth had that solidity of understanding which betokens more than talent, and which is the usual substratum of genius.

He would not depend alone on the precarious and often unhonored toils of polemical literature for that distinction on which he had fixed his steadfast heart. Patiently he ploded on through the formal drudgeries of his new profession, lighting up dulness by his own acute comprehension, weaving complexities into simple system by the grasp of an intellect inured to generalize; and learning to love even what was most distasteful, by the sense of difficulty overcome, and the clearer vision which every step through the mists, and up the hill, gave of the land beyond. Of what the superficial are apt to consider genius, John Ardworth had but little. He had some imagination (for a true thinker is never without that), but he had a very slight share of fancy. He did not flirt with the Muses; on the granite of his mind, few flowers could spring. His style rushing and earnest, admitted at times of a humor not without delicacy—though less delicate than forcible and deep—but it was little adorned with wit, and still less with poetry.

Yet Ardworth had genius, and genius ample and magnificent. There was genious in that industrious energy so patient in the conquest of detail, so triumphant in the perception of results. There was genius in that kindly sympathy with mankind—genius in that stubborn determination to succeed—genius in that vivid comprhension of affairs, and the large interests of the world—genius fed in the labors of the closet, and evinced the instant he was brought in contact with men; evinced in readiness of thought, grasp of memory, even in a rough imperious manner, which showed him born to speak strong truths, and in their name to struggle and command.

Rough was this man often in his exterior, though really gentle and kind-hearted. John Ardworth had sacrificed to no Graces; he would have thrown Lord Chesterfield into a fever. Not that he was ever vulgar, for vulgarity implies affectation of refinement, but he talked loud, and laughed loud, if the whim seized him, and rubbed his great hands, with a boyish heartiness of glee, if he discomfited an adversary in argument. Or, sometimes he would sit abstracted and moody, and answer briefly and boorishly those who interrupted

* Amongst those whom the "Union" almost contemporaneously prepared for public life, and whose distinction has kept the promise of their youth, we may mention the eminent barristers, Messrs. Austin and Cockburn: and amongst statesmen, Lord Grey, Mr. C. Buller, Mr. Charles Villiers, and Mr. Macaulay. Nor ought we to forget those brilliant competitors for the prizes of the University, Dr. Kennedy (now headmaster of Shrewsbury School) and the late Winthrop M. Praed.

him. Young men were mostly afraid of him, though he wanted but fame to have a set of admiring disciples. Old men censured his presumption, and recoiled from the novelty of his ideas. Women alone liked and appreciated him, as, with their finer insight into character, they generally do, what is honest and sterling. Some strange failings, too, had John Ardworth —some of the usual vagaries and contradictions of clever men. As a system, he was rigidly abstemious. For days together he would drink nothing but water, eat nothing but bread, or hard biscuit, or a couple of eggs: then having wound up some alloted portion of work, Ardworth would indulge what he called a self-saturnalia—would stride off with old college friends to an inn in one of the suburbs, and spend, as he said triumphantly, 'a day of blessed debauch!' Innocent enough, for the most part, the debauch was;—consisting in cracking jests, strining puns, a fish dinner, perhaps, and an extra bottle or two of fiery port. Sometimes this jolity, which was always loud and uproarious, found its scene in one of the cider cellars or midnight taverns, but Ardworth's labors on the Press made that latter dissipation extremely rare. These relaxations were always succeeded by a mien more than usually grave, a manner more than usually curt and ungracious, an application more than ever rigorous and intense. John Ardworth was not a good-tempered man, but he was the best-natured man that ever breathed. He was like all ambitious persons, very much occupied with self, and yet it would have been a ludicrous misapplication of words to call him selfish. Even the desire of fame which absorbed him was but a part of benevolence—a desire to promote justice and to serve his kind.

John Ardworth's shaggy brows were bent over his open volumes, when his clerk entered noiselessly, and placed on his table a letter which the two-penny postman had just delivered. With an impatient shrug of the shoulders, Ardworth glanced towards the superscription, but his eye became earnest and his interest aroused, as he recognized the hand. "Again!" he muttered, "what mystery is this? Who can feel such interest in my fate?" He broke the seal, and read as follows:—

"Do you neglect my advice, or have you begun to act upon it? Are you contented only with the slow process of mechanical application, or will you make a triumphant effort to abridge your apprenticeship, and emerge at once into fame and power? I repeat that you fritter away your talents and your opportunities upon this miserable task-work on a journal. I am impatient for you. Come forward yourself, put your force and your knowledge into some work of which the world may know the author. Day after day, I am examining into your destiny, and day after day I believe more and more that you are not fated for the tedious drudgery to which you doom your youth. I would have you great, but in the senate, not a wretched casuist at the bar. Appear in public as an individual authority, not one of that nameless troop of shadows, contemned while dreaded as, the Press. Write for renown. Go into the world, and make friends. Soften your rugged bearing. Lift yourself above that herd whom you call *the people*. What if you are born of the noble class? What if your career is as Gentleman not Plebeian? Want not for money. Use what I send you, as the young and the well-born should use it; or let it, at least, gain you a respite from toils for bread—and support you in your struggle to emancipate yourself from obscurity into fame.

"YOUR UNKNOWN FRIEND."

A bank-note for 100*l.* dropped from the envelope, as Ardworth silently replaced the letter on the table.

Thrice before had he received communications in the same handwriting, and much to the same effect. Certainly, to a mind of less strength, there would have been something very unsettling in those vague hints of a station higher than he owned—of a future at variance with the toilsome lot he had drawn from the urn; but after a single glance over his lone position in all its bearings, and probable expectations, Ardworth's steady sense shook off the slight disturbance such misty vaticinations had effected. His mother's family was indeed unknown to him—he was even ignorant of her maiden name. But that very obscurity seemed unfavorable to much hope from such a quarter. The connections with the rich and well-born are seldom left obscure. From his father's family he had not one expectation. More had he been moved by exhortations now generally repeated, but in a previous letter more precisely detailed—*viz.*, to appeal to the reading public in his acknowledged person, and by some striking and original work. This idea he had often contemplated and revolved; but partly the necessity of keeping pace with the many exigencies of the hour, had deterred him, and partly also the conviction of his sober judgment, that a man does himself no good at the bar, even by the most brilliant distinction gained in discursive fields.

He had the natural yearning of the Restless Genius; and the Patient Genius (higher power of the two) had suppressed the longing. Still, so far, the whispers of his correspondent tempted and aroused. But hitherto he had sought to persuade himself that the communications thus strangely forced on him, arose, perhaps, from idle motives—a jest, it might be, of one of his old college friends, or at best the vain enthusiasm of some more credulous admirer. But the enclosure now sent to him, forbade either of these suppositions. Who that he knew could afford so costly a jest, or so extravagant a tribute? He was perplexed, and with his perplexity was mixed a kind of fear. Plain, earnest, unromantic in the common acceptation of the word, the mystery of this intermeddling with his fate, this arrogation of the licence to spy, the right to counsel, and the privilege to bestow, gave him the uneasiness the bravest men may feel at noises in the dark. That day he could apply no more—he could not settle back to his Law Reports. He took two or three unquiet turns up and down his smoke-dried cell, then locked up the letter and enclosure, seized his hat, and strode, with his usual lusty swinging strides, into the open air.

But still the letter haunted him. "And if," he said, almost audibly, "if I were the heir to some higher station, why then I might have a heart like idle men; and Helen—beloved Helen!"—he paused, sighed, shook his rough head, shaggy with neglected curls, and added —"As if even then I could steal myself into a girl's good graces! Man's esteem I may command, though poor—woman's love could I win, though rich! Pooh! pooh! every wood does not make a Mercury: and faith, the wood I am made of, will scarcely cut up into a lover."

Nevertheless, though thus soliloquizing, Ardworth mechanically bent his way towards Brompton, and halted, half ashamed of himself, at the house where Helen lodged with her aunt. It was a building that stood apart from all the cottages and villas of that charming suburb, half way down a narrow lane, and enclosed by high melancholy walls, deep set in which a small door, with the paint blistered and weather stained, gave unfrequented entrance to the demesne. A woman servant of middle age, and starched puritanical appearance, answered the loud ring of the bell, and Ardworth seemed a privileged visitor, for she asked him no question, as with a slight nod, and a smileless stupid expression in a face otherwise comely, she led the way across a paved path, much weed-grown, to the house. That house itself had somewhat of a stern and sad exterior. It was not ancient, yet it looked old from shabbiness and neglect. The vine, loosened from the rusty nails, trailed rankly against the wall, and fell in crawling branches over the ground. The house had once been white-washed, but the color, worn off in great patches, distained with damp, struggled here and there with the dingy chipped bricks beneath. There was no peculiar want of what is called 'tenantable repair;' the windows were whole, and doubtless the roof sheltered from the rain. But the wood-work that encased the panes was decayed, and house-leek covered the tiles. Altogether there was that forlorn and cheerless aspect about the place, which chills the visitor, he defines not why. And Ardworth steadied his usual careless step, and crept, as if timidly, up the creaking stairs.

On entering the drawing-room—it seemed at first deserted; but the eye searching round, perceived something stir in the recess of a huge chair—set by the fireless hearth. And from amidst a mass of coverings a pale face emerged, and a thin hand waved its welcome to the visitor.

Ardworth approached, pressed the hand, and drew a seat near to the sufferer's

"You are better, I hope?" he said cordially, —and yet in a tone of more respect than was often perceptible in his deep blunt voice.

"I am always the same," was the quiet answer; "come nearer still. Your visits cheer me."

And as these last words were said, Madame Dalibard raised herself from her recumbent posture, and gazed long upon Ardworth's face of power and front of thought. "You overfatigue yourself, my poor kinsman," she said, with a certain tenderness: "you look already too old for your young years."

"That's no disadvantage at the bar."

"Is the bar your means, or your end?"

"My dear Madame Dalibard, it is my profession."

"No, your profession is to rise. John Ard-

worth," and the low voice swelled in its volume. "You are bold, able, and aspiring—for this, I love you—love you almost—almost as a mother. Your fate," she continued, hurriedly, "interests me; your energies inspire me with admiration. Often I sit here for hours, musing over your destiny to be—so that at times, I may almost say that in your life I live."

Ardworth looked embarrassed, and with an awkward attempt at compliment, he began hesitatingly: "I should think too highly of myself, if I could really believe that you——"

"Tell me," interrupted Madame Dalibard: "we have had many conversations upon grave and subtle matters; we have disputed on the secret mysteries of the human mind; we have compared our several experiences of outward life and the mechanism of the social world,—tell me then, and frankly, what do you think of me? Do you regard me merely as your sex is apt to regard the woman, who aspires to equal men—a thing of borrowed phrases and unsound ideas—feeble to guide and unskilled to teach? or do you recognize in this miserable body a mind of force not unworthy yours, ruled by an experience larger than your own?"

"I think of you," answered Ardworth, frankly, "as the most remarkable woman I have ever met. Yet do not be angry, I do not like to yield to the influence which you gain over me when we meet. It disturbs my canvictions—it disquiets my reason—I do not settle back to my life so easily after your breath has passed over it."

"And yet," said Lucretia, with a solemn sadness in her voice, "that influence is but the natural power which cold maturity exercises on ardent youth. It is my mournful advantage over you, that disquiets your happy calm. It is my experience that unsettles the fallacies which you name 'convictions.' Let this pass. I asked your opinion of me, because I wished to place at your service all that knowledge of life which I possess. In proportion as you esteem me, you will accept or reject my counsels."

"I have benefited by them already. It is the tone that you advised me to assume, that gave me an importance I had not before, with that old formalist whose paper I serve, and whose prejudices I shock; it is to your criticisms that I owe the more practical turn of my writings, and the greater hold they have taken on the public."

"Trifles indeed, these," said Madame Dalibard, with a half smile. "Let them at least induce you to listen to me; if I propose to make your path more pleasant, yet your ascent more rapid."

Ardworth knit his brows, and his countenance assumed an expression of doubt and curiosity. However, he only replied with a blunt laugh—

"You must be wise, indeed, if you have discovered a royal road to distinction!

"'Ah. who can tell how hard it is to climb
The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar'

A more sensible exclamation than poets usually preface with their whining 'Ah's' and 'Oh's!'

"What we *are* is nothing," pursued Madame Dalibard; "what we *seem* is much."

Ardworth thrust his hands into his pockets, and shook his head. The wise woman continued, unheeding his dissent from her premises.

"Everything you are taught to value has a likeness, and it is that likeness which the world values. Take a man out of the streets, poor and ragged, what will the world do with him? Send him to the work-house, if not to the jail. Ask a great painter to take that man's portrait, rags, squalor, and all; and kings will bid for the picture. You would thrust the man from your doors, you would place the portrait in your palaces. It is the same with qualities, the portrait is worth more than the truth. What is virtue without character? But a man without virtue may thrive on a character! What is genius without success? But how often you bow to success without genius! John Ardworth, possess yourself of the portraits—win the character—seize the success."

"Madam," exclaimed Ardworth, rudely "this is horrible!"

"Horrible, it may be," said Madame Dalibard, gently, and feeling, perhaps, that she had gone too far: "but it is the world's judgment. *Seem*, then, as well as *be*. You have virtue, as I believe. Well, wrap yourself in it—in your closet. Go into the world, and earn character. If you have genius, let it comfort you. Rush into the crowd and get success."

"Stop!" cried Ardworth; "I recognize you.

How could I be so blind? It is you who have written to me, and in the same strain; you have robbed yourself—you, poor sufferer, to throw extravagance into these strong hands. And why? What am I to you?"

An expression of actual fondness softened Lucretia's face, as she looked up at him, and replied; "I will tell you hereafter what you are to me. First, I confess it is I whose letters have perplexed, perhaps offended you. The sum that I sent, I do not miss. I have more—will ever have more at your command—never fear. Yes, I wish you to go into the world, not as a dependent, but as an equal to the world's favorites. I wish you to know more of men than mere law-books teach you. I wish you to be in men's mouths, create a circle that shall talk of young Ardworth—that talk would travel to those who can advance your career. The very possession of money in certain stages of life gives assurance to the manner, gives attraction to the address."

"But," said Ardworth, "all this is very well for some favorite of birth and fortune; but for me—yet speak, and plainly; you throw out hints that I am what I know not; but something less dependent on his nerves and brain, than is plain John Ardworth. What is it you mean?"

Madame Dalibard bent her face over her breast, and rocking herself in her chair, seemed to muse for some moments before she answered.

"When I first came to England, some months ago, I desired naturally to learn all the particulars of my family and kindred, from which my long residence abroad had estranged me. John Walter Ardworth was related to my half-sister, to me he was but a mere connection. However, I knew something of his history, yet I did not know that he *had* a son. Shortly before I came to England, I learned that one who *passed* for his son had been brought up by Mr. Fielden, and from Mr. Fielden I have since learned all the grounds for that belief, from which you take the name of Ardworth."

Lucretia paused a moment; and after a glance at the impatient, wondering, and eager countenance that bent intent upon her, she resumed:

"Your reputed father was, you are doubtless aware, of reckless and extravagant habits He had been put into the army by my uncle, and he entered that profession with the careless buoyancy of his sanguine nature. I remember those days—that day! Well, to return—where was I?—Walter Ardworth had the folly to entertain strong notions of politics. He dreamt of being a soldier, and yet persuaded himself to be a republican. His notions, so hateful in his profession, got wind: he disguised nothing, he neglected the portraits of things—*Appearances*. He excited the rancor of his commanding officer—for politics then, more even than now, were implacable ministrants to hate—occasion presented itself: during the short Peace of Amiens he had been recalled. He had to head a detachment of soldiers against some mob, in Ireland, I believe; he did not fire on the mob according to orders—so, at least, it was said: John Walter Ardworth was tried by a court-martial, and broke! But you know all this, perhaps!"

"My poor father! Only in part: I knew that he had been dismissed the army—I believed unjustly. He was a soldier, and yet he dared to think for himself, and be humane!"

"But my uncle had left him a legacy—it brought no blessing—none of that old man's gold did. Where are they all now? Dalibard, Susan, and her fair-faced husband, Where? Vernon is in his grave—but one son of many left! Gabriel Varney lives, it is true!—and I! But that gold—yea, in our hands, there was a curse on it! Walter Ardworth had his legacy—his nature was gay: if disgraced in his profession, he found men to pity and praise him—Fools of Party like himself. He lived joyously—drank or gamed, or lent or borrowed—what matters the wherefore?—he was in debt—he lived at last a wretched, shifting, fugitive life—snatching bread where he could—with the bailiffs at his heels—then, for a short time, we met again."

Lucretia's brow grew black as night, as her voice dropped at that last sentence, and it was with a start that she continued.

"In the midst of this hunted existence, Walter Ardworth appeared, late one night, at Mr. Fielden's with an infant. He seemed, so says Mr. Fielden, ill, worn, and haggard. He entered into no explanations with respect to the child that accompanied him, and retired at once to rest. What follows, Mr. Fielden, at my request, has noted down. Read, and see

what claim you have to the honorable parentage so vaguely ascribed to you."

As she spoke, Madame Dalibard opened a box on her table, drew forth a paper in Fielden's writing and placed it in Ardworth's hand. After some preliminary statement of the writer's intimacy with the elder Ardworth, and the appearance of the latter at his house, as related by Madame Dalibard, etc., the document went on thus:—

"The next day, when my poor guest was still in bed, my servant Hannah came to advise me that two persons were without, waiting to see me. As is my wont, I bade them be shown in. On their entrance (two rough farmer-looking men they were, whom I thought might be coming to hire my little pasture field), I prayed them to speak low, as a sick gentleman was just over head. Whereupon, and without saying a word further, the two strangers made a rush from the room, leaving me dumb with amazement; in a few moments, I heard voices and a scuffle above. I recovered myself, and thinking robbers had entered my peaceful house, I called out lustily, when Hannah came in, and we both, taking courage, went up stairs, and found that poor Waller was in the hands of these supposed robbers, who in truth were but bailiffs. They would not trust him out of their sight for a moment. However, he took it more pleasantly than I could have supposed possible; prayed me in a whisper to take care of the child, and I should soon hear from him again. In less than an hour, he was gone. Two days afterwards, I received from him a hurried letter, without address, of which this is the copy:—

"'DEAR FRIEND,—I slipt from the bailiffs, and here I am in a safe little tavern in sight of the sea! Mother Country is a very bad parent to me! Mother Brownrigg herself could scarcely be worse. I shall work out my passage to some foreign land, and if I can recover my health (sea-air is bracing!) I don't despair of getting my bread honestly, somehow. If ever I can pay my debts I may return. But, meanwhile, my good old tutor, what will you think of me? You to whom my sole return for so much pains taken in vain, is another mouth to feed! And no money to pay for the board! Yet you'll not grudge the child a place at your table, will you? No, nor kind, saving Mrs. Fielden either—God bless her tender, economical soul! You know quite enough of me to be sure that I shall very soon either free you of the boy, or send you something, to prevent its being an encumberance. I would say, love and pity the child for my sake. But I own I feel—— By Jove, I must be off—I hear the first signal from the vessel, that——Yours in haste. 'J. W. A.'"

Young Ardworth stopped from the lecture, and sighed heavily. There seemed to him, in this letter, worse than a mock gaiety;—a certain levity and recklessness—which jarred on his own high principles. And the want of affection for the child thus abandoned was evident—not one fond word. He resumed the statement with a gloomy and disheartened attention.

"This was all I heard from poor erring Walter for more than three years, but I knew, in spite of his follies, that his heart was sound at bottom," (the son's eye brightened here, and he kissed the paper), "and the child was no burthen to us—we loved it, not only for Ardworth's sake, but for its own, and for charity's, and Christ's. Ardworth's second letter was as follows:—

"'*En iterum Crispinus!*—I am still alive, and getting on in the world—ay, and honestly too—I am no longer spending heedlessly; I am saving for my debts, and I shall live, I trust, to pay off every farthing. First, for my debt to you—I send an order not signed in my name, but equally valid, on Messrs. Drummond, for £250. Repay yourself what the boy has cost. Let him be educated to get his own living—if clever, as a scholar or a lawyer—if dull, as a tradesman. Whatever I may gain, he will have his own way to make. I ought to tell you the story connected with his birth, but it is one of pain and shame; and on reflection, I feel that I have no right to injure him by affixing to his early birth an approbrium of which he himself is guiltless. If ever I return to England, you shall know all, and by your counsels I will abide. Love to all your happy family—Your grateful Friend and Pupil.'

"From this letter I began to suspect that the poor boy was probably not born in wedlock, and that Ardworth's silence arose from his compunction. I conceived it best never to mention this suspicion to John himself as he grew up. Why should I afflict him by a doubt from which his father shrunk, and which might only exist in my own inexperienced and uncharitable interpretation of some vague words? When John was fourteen, I received from Messrs. Drummond a further sum of £500, but without any line from Ardworth, and only to the effect that Messrs. Drummond were directed by a correspondent in Calcutta to pay me the said sum on behalf of expenses incurred for the maintenance of the child left to my charge by John Walter Ardworth. My young pupil had been two years at the university, when I received the letter of which this is a copy:—

"'How are you?—still well—still happy?—let me hope so! I have not written to you, dear old friend, but I have not been forgetful of you—I have inquired of you through my correspondents, and have learned, from time to time, such accounts as satisfied my grateful affection for you. I find that you have given the boy my name? Well, let him bear it—it is nothing to boast of, such as it became in my person; but, mind, I do not, therefore, acknowledge him as *my* son. I wish him to think himself without parents, without other aid in the career of life than his own industry and talent,—if talent he has. Let him go through the healthful probation of toil—let him search for and find independence. Till he is of age, £150 per annum will be paid quarterly to your account for him at Messrs. Drummonds'. If then, to set him up in any business or profession, a sum of money be necessary, name the amount by a line, signed A.B., Calcutta, to the care of Messrs. Drummond, and it will reach, and find me disposed to follow your instructions. But after that time all further supply from me will cease. Do not sup-

pose, because I send this from India, that I am laden with rupees; all I can hope to attain is a competence. That boy is not the only one who has claims to share it. Even therefore, if I had the wish to rear him to the extravagant habits that ruined myself, I have not the power. Yes!—let him lean on his own strength. In the letter you send me, write fully of your family, your sons, and write as to a man who can perhaps help them in the world, and will be too happy thus in some slight degree to repay all he owes you. You would smile approvingly if you saw me now—a steady, money-getting man, but still yours as ever.

"'P.S.—Do not let the boy write to me, nor give him this clue to my address.'

"On the receipt of this letter, I wrote fully to Ardworth about the excellent promise and conduct of his poor neglected son. I told him truly he was a son any father might be proud of, and rebuked, even to harshness, Walter's unseemly tone respecting him. One's child is one's child, however the father may have wronged the mother. To this letter I never received any answer. When John was of age, and had made himself independent of want, by obtaining a college fellowship, I spoke to him about his prospects. I told him that his father, though residing abroad and for some reasons keeping himself concealed, had munificently paid hitherto for his maintenance, and would lay down what might be necessary to start him in business, or perhaps place him in the army; but that his father might be better pleased if he could show a love of independence, and henceforth maintain himself. I knew the boy I spoke to—John thought as I did, and I never applied for another donation to the elder Ardworth. The allowance ceased: John since then has maintained himself. I have heard no more from his father, though I have written often to the address he gave me. I begin to fear that he is dead. I once went up to town and saw one of the heads of Messrs. Drummonds' firm—a very polite gentleman, but he could give me no information, except that he obeyed instructions from a correspondent at Calcutta—one Mr. Macfarren. Whereon I wrote to Mr. Macfarren, and asked him, as I thought very pressingly, to tell me all he knew of poor Ardworth the elder. He answered shortly, that he knew of no such person at all, and that A.B. was a French merchant, settled in Calcutta, who had been dead for above two years. I now gave up all hopes of any further intelligence, and was more convinced than ever that I had acted rightly in withholding from poor John my correspondence with his father. The lad had been curious and inquisitive naturally, but when I told him that I thought it my duty to his father to be so reserved, he forebore to press me. I have only to add, first, that by all the inquiries I could make of the surviving members of Walter Ardworth's family, it seemed their full belief that he had never been married, and therefore I fear we must conclude that he had no legitimate children, which may account for, though it cannot excuse, his neglect; and secondly, with respect to the sums received on dear John's account—I put them all by, capital and interest, deducting only the expense of his first year at Cambridge (the which I could not defray, without injuring my own children), and it all stands in his name at Messrs. Drummonds', vested in the Three Per Cents. That I have not told him of this was by my poor dear wife's advice; for she said very sensibly, and she was a shrewd woman on money matters, 'If he knows he has such a large sum all in the lump, who knows but he may grow idle and extravagant, and spend it at once, like his father before him; whereas, some time or other, he will want to marry, or need money for some particular purpose—then what a blessing it will be!'

"However, my dear madam, as you know the world better than I do, you can now do as you please, both as to communicating to John all the information herein contained as to his parentage, and as to apprising him of the large sum of which he is lawfully possessed.

MATHEW FIELDER.

"P.S.—In justice to poor John Ardworth, and to show that whatever whim he may have conceived about his own child, he had still a heart kind enough to remember mine, though Heaven knows I said nothing about them in my letters, my eldest boy received an offer of an excellent place in a West India merchant's house, and has got on to be chief clerk, and my second son was presented to a living of one hundred and seventeen pounds a-year, by a gentleman he never heard of. Though I never traced these good acts to Ardworth, from whom else could they come?"

Ardworth put down the paper without a word; and Lucretia, who had watched him while he read, was struck with the self-control he evinced when he came to the end of the disclosure. She laid her hand on his, and said,

"Courage! you have lost nothing!"

"Nothing!" said Ardworth, with a bitter smile. "A father's love and a father's name—nothing!"

"But," exclaimed Lucretia, "is this man your father? Does a father's heart beat in one line of those hard sentences? No, no; it seems to me probable—it seems to me almost certain, that you are—" she stopped, and continued with a calmer accent, "near to my own blood. I am now in England—in London—to prosecute the inquiry built upon that hope. If so—if so—you shall—" Madame Dalibard again stopped abruptly, and there was something terrible in the very exultation of her countenance. She drew a long breath, and resumed, with an evident effort at self-command—"If so, I have a right to the interest I feel for you. Suffer me yet to be silent as to the grounds of my belief, and—and—love me a little in the meanwhile!"

Her voice trembled, as if with rushing tears, at these last words, and there was almost an agony in the tone in which they were said, and in the gesture of the clasped hands she held out to him.

Much moved (amidst all his mingled emo-

tions at the tale thus made known to him) by the manner and voice of the narrator, Ardworth bent down and kissed the extended hands. Then he rose abruptly, walked to and fro the room, muttering to himself—paused opposite the window—threw it open, as for air, and, indeed, fairly gasped for breath. When he turned round, however, his face was composed, and folding his arms on his large breast with a sudden action, he said aloud, and yet rather to himself than to his listener,—

"What matter after all, by what name men call our fathers? We ourselves make our own fate! Bastard or noble, not a jot care I. Give me ancestors, I will not disgrace them; raze from my lot even the very name of father, and my sons shall have an ancestor in me!"

As he thus spoke, there was a rough grandeur in his hard face and the strong ease of his powerful form. And while thus standing and thus looking, the door opened, and Varney walked in abruptly.

These two men had met occasionally at Madame Dalibard's, but no intimacy had been established between them. Varney was formal and distant to Ardworth, and Ardworth felt a repugnance to Varney. With the instinct of sound, sterling, weighty natures, he detected at once, and disliked heartily, that something of gaudy, false, exaggerated, and hollow, which pervaded Gabriel Varney's talk and manner—even the trick of his walk, and the cut of his dress. And Ardworth wanted that boyish and beautiful luxuriance of character which belonged to Percival St. John, easy to please and to be pleased, and expanding into the warmth of admiration for all talent and all distinction. For art, if not the highest, Ardworth cared not a straw: it was nothing to him that Varney painted and composed, and ran showily through the jargon of literary babble, or toyed with the puzzles of unsatisfying metaphysics. He saw but a charlatan, and he had not yet learned from experience what strength and what danger lie hid in the boa parading its colors in the sun, and shifting, in the sensual sportiveness of its being, from bough to bough.

Varney halted in the middle of the room, as his eye rested first on Ardworth, and then glanced towards Madame Dalibard. But Ardworth, jarred from his reverie or resolves by the sound of a voice discordant to his ear at all times, especially in the mood which then possessed him, scarcely returned Varney's salutation, buttoned his coat over his chest, seized his hat, and upsetting two chairs, and very considerably disturbing the gravity of a round table, forced his way to Madame Dalibard, pressed her hand, and said in a whisper, "I shall see you again soon," and vanished.

Varney, soothing his hair with fingers that shone with rings, slid into the seat next Madame Dalibard, which Ardworth had lately occupied, and said, "If I were a clytemnestra, I should dread an Orestes in such a son!"

Madame Dalibard shot towards the speaker one of the sidelong suspicious glances which of old had characterized Lucretia, and said,

"Clytemnestre was happy! The Furies slept to her crime, and haunted but the avenger."

"Hist!" said Varney.

The door opened, and Ardworth reappeared.

"I quite forgot, what I half came to know.—How is Helen? Did she return home safe?"

"Safe—yes!"

"Dear girl—I am glad to hear it! Where is she? Not gone to those Mivers' again! I am no aristocrat, but why should one couple together refinement and vulgarity?"

"Mr. Ardworth," said Madame Dalibard, with haughty coldness, "my niece is under my care, and you will permit me to judge for myself how to discharge the trust. Mr. Mivers is her own relation—a nearer one than you are."

Not at all abashed by the rebuke, Ardworth said carelessly, "Well, I shall talk to you again on that subject. Meanwhile, pray give my love to her—Helen, I mean."

Madame Dalibard half rose in her chair, then sunk back again, motioning with her hand to Ardworth to approach. Varney rose and walked to the window, as if sensible that something was about to be said not meant for his ear.

When Ardworth was close to her chair, Madame Dalibard grasped his hand with a vigor that surprised him, and drawing him nearer still, whispered as he bent down—

"I will give Helen your love, if it is a cousin's—or, if you will, a brother's love. Do you intend—do you feel—another, a

warmer love? Speak, sir!" and drawing suddenly back, she gazed on his face, with a stern and menacing expression, her teeth set, and the lips firmly pressed together.

Ardworth, though a little startled, and half angry, answered with the low ironical laugh, not uncommon to him, "Pish! you ladies are apt to think us men much greater fools than we are. A briefless lawyer is not very inflammable tinder. Yes, a cousin's love—quite enough. Poor little Helen! time enough to put other notions into her head; and then—she will have a sweetheart, gay and handsome like herself!"

"Ay," said Madame Dalibard, with a slight smile, "ay, I am satisfied. Come soon."

Ardworth nodded, and hurried down the stairs. As he gained the door, he caught sight of Helen at a distance, bending over a flower-bed in the neglected garden. He paused, irresolute, a moment. "No," he muttered to himself; "no, I am fit company only for myself! A long walk into the fields, and then—away with these mists round the Past and Future; the Present at least is mine!"

CHAPTER V.

The Weavers and the Woof.

"AND what," said Varney—"what, while we are pursuing a fancied clue, and seeking to provide first a name, and then a fortune for this young lawyer—what steps have you really taken to meet the danger that menaces *me*—to secure, if our inquiries fail, an independence for yourself? Months have elapsed, and you have still shrunk from advancing the great scheme upon which we built, when the daughter of Susan Mainwaring was admitted to your hearth."

"Why recall me, in these rare moments when I feel myself human still—why recall me back to the nethermost abyss of revenge and crime? Oh! let me be sure that I have still a son! Even if John Ardworth, with his gifts and energies, be denied to me!—a son, though in rags, I will give him wealth!—a son, though ignorant as the merest boor, I will pour into his brain my dark wisdom?—a son—a son!—my heart swells at the word. Ah, you sneer! Yes, my heart swells, but not with the mawkish fondness of a feeble mother. In a son, I shall live again—transmigrate from this tortured and horrible life of mine—drink back my youth. In him I shall rise from my fall—strong in his power—great in his grandeur. It is because I was born a woman—had woman's poor passions, and infirm weakness that I am what I am—I would transfer myself into the soul of man—man who has the strength to act, and the privilege to rise. Into the bronze of man's nature I would pour the experience which has broken, with its fierce elements, the puny vessel of clay. Yes, Gabriel, in return for all I have done and sacrificed for you, I ask but co-operation in that one hope of my shattered and storm-beat being. Bear—forbear—await—risk not that hope by some wretched peddling crime, which will bring on us both detection—some wanton revelry in guilt, which is not worth the terror that treads upon its heels."

"You forget," answered Varney, with a kind of submissive sullenness, for whatever had passed between these two persons in their secret and fearful intimacy, there was still a power in Lucretia, surviving her fall amidst the fiends, that impressed Varney with the only respect he felt for man or woman—"you forget strangely the nature of our elaborate and master project, when you speak of '*peddling* crime,' or '*wanton* revelry' in guilt! You forget, too, how every hour that we waste, deepens the peril that surrounds me, and may sweep from your side the sole companion that can aid you in your objects—nay, without whom, they must wholly fail. Let me speak first of that most urgent danger, for your memory seems short and troubled, since you have learned only to hope the recovery of your son. If this man, Stubmore, in whom the trust created by my uncle's will is now vested—once comes to town—once begins to bustle about his accursed projects of transferring the money from the Bank of England, I tell you again and again that my forgery on the bank will be detected, and that transportation will be the smallest penalty inflicted; part of the forgery, as you know, was committed on your behalf, to find the monies nccessary for the research for your son—committed on the clear understanding, that our project on Helen should repay me—should

enable me, perhaps undetected, to restore the sums illegally abstracted, or, at the worst to confess to Stubmore, whose character I well know—that oppressed by difficulties, I had yielded to temptation—that I had forged his name (as I had forged his father's) as an authority to sell the capital from the bank, and that now, in replacing the money, I repaid my error, and threw myself on his indulgence—on his silence. I say, that I know enough of the man to know, that I should be thus cheaply saved, or at the worst, I should have but to strengthen his compassion by a bribe to his avarice. But if I cannot replace the money, I am lost."

"Well, well," said Lucretia, "the money you shall have, let me but find my son, and——"

"Grant me patience!" cried Varney, impetuously; "but what can your son do, if found, unless you endow him with the heritage of Laughton? To do that, Helen, who comes next to Percival St. John, in the course of the entail, must cease to live! Have I not aided—am I not aiding you hourly, in your grand objects? This evening I shall see a man whom I have long lost sight of, but who has acquired in a lawyer's life the true scent after evidence;—if that evidence exist, it shall be found. I have just learned his address. By to-morrow he shall be on the track. I have stinted myself to save from the results of the last forgery the gold to whet his zeal. For the rest, as I have said, your design involves the removal of two lives. Already, over the one more difficult to slay, the shadow creeps and the pall hangs. I have won, as you wished and as was necessary, young St. John's familiar acquaintance; when the hour comes, he is in my hands."

Lucretia smiled sternly: "If," she said, between her ground teeth, "the father forbade me the house that was my heritage! I have but to lift a finger and breathe a word, and, desolate as I am, I thrust from that home the son! The spoiler left me the world—I leave his son the grave!"

"But," said Varney, doggedly pursuing his dreadful object, "why force me to repeat that his is not the only life between you and your son's inheritance? St. John gone, Helen still remains. And what, if your researches fail, are we to lose the rich harvest which Helen will yield us—a harvest you reap with the same sickle which gathers in your revenge? Do you no longer see in Helen's face the features of her mother? Is the perfidy of William Mainwaring forgotten or forgiven?"

"Gabriel Varney," said Lucretia, in a hollow and tremulous voice, "when in that hour in which my whole being was revulsed, and I heard the cord snap from the anchor, and saw the demons of the storm gather round my bark—when, in that hour, I stooped calmly down and kissed my rival's brow, I murmured an oath, which seemed not inspired by my own soul, but by an influence henceforth given to my fate—I vowed that the perfidy dealt to me should be repaid—I vowed that the ruin of my own existence should fall on the brow which I kissed. I vowed that if shame and disgrace were to supply the inheritance I had forfeited, I would not stand alone amidst the scorn of the pitiless world. In the vision of my agony, I saw, afar, the altar dressed, and the bride-chamber prepared, and I breathed my curse, strong as prophecy, on the marriage-hearth and the marriage-bed. Why dream, then, that I would rescue the loathed child of that loathed union from your grasp?—But is the time come? Yours may be come—is mine?"

Something so awful there was in the look of his accomplice—so intense in the hate of her low voice—that Varney, wretch as he was, and contemplating at that very hour the foulest, and most hideous guilt, drew back, appalled.

Madame Dalibard resumed, and in a somewhat softer tone, but softened only by the anguish of despair.

"Oh, had it been otherwise, what might I have been! Given over from that hour to the very incarnation of plotting crime—none to resist the evil impulse of my own maddening heart—the partner, forced on me by fate, leading me deeper and deeper into the inextricable hell—from that hour, fraud upon fraud, guilt upon guilt, infamy heaped on infamy, till I stand a marvel to myself that the thunderbolt falls not—that Nature thrusts not from her breast a living outrage on all her laws! Was I not justified in the desire of retribution? Every step that I fell, every glance that I gave to the gulf below, increased but in me the desire for revenge. All my acts had flowed from one fount—should the stream roll pollution, and the fount spring pure?"

"You have had your revenge on your rival and her husband."

"I had it, and I passed on!" said Lucretia with nostrils dilated as with haughty triumph; "They were crushed, and I suffered them to live! Nay, when, by chance, I heard of William Mainwaring's death, I bowed down my head, and I almost think I wept. The old days came back upon me. Yes, I wept! But I had not destroyed their love. No, no; there, I had miserably failed. A pledge of that love lived. I had left their hearth barren; Fate sent them a comfort, which I had not foreseen. And suddenly my hate returned, my wrongs rose again, my vengeance was not sated. The love that had destroyed more than my life—my soul, rose again and cursed me in the face of Helen. The oath which I took when I kissed my rival's brow, demanded another prey when I kissed the child of those nuptials."

"You are prepared at last, then, to act?" cried Varney, in a tone of savage joy.

At that moment, close under the window, rose, sudden and sweet, the voice of one singing—the young voice of Helen. The words were so distinct that they came to the ears of the dark-plotting, and guilty pair. In the song itself there was little to remark, or peculiarly apposite to the consciences of those who heard; yet in the extreme and touching purity of the voice, and in the innocence of the general spirit of the words, trite as might be the image they conveyed, there was something that contrasted so fearfully their own thoughts and minds, that they sate silent, looking vacantly into each other's faces, and shrinking, perhaps to turn their eyes within themselves.

HELEN'S HYMN.

"Ye fade, yet still how sweet, ye Flowers!
Your scent outlives the bloom!
So, Father, may my mortal hours
Grow sweeter towards the tomb!

"In withered leaves a healing cure
The simple gleaners find;
So may our withered hopes endure
In virtues left behind!

"Oh, not to me be vainly given
The lesson ye bestow,
Of thoughts that rise in sweets to Heaven,
And turn to use below."

The song died, but still the listeners remained silent, till at length shaking off the effect, with his laugh of discordant irony, Varney said,—

"Sweet innocence, fresh from the nursery! Would it not be sin to suffer the world to mar it? You hear the prayer—why not grant it, and let the flower '*turn to use below?*'"

"Ah, but could it wither first!" muttered Lucretia, with an accent of suppressed rage. "Do you think that her—that his—daughter is to me but a vulgar life, to be sacrificed merely for gold? Imagine away your sex, man! Women only know what I—such as I, woman still—feel in the presence of the pure! Do you fancy that I should not have held death a blessing, if death could have found me in youth such as Helen is? Ah, could she but live to suffer! Die! Well, since it must be—since my son requires the sacrifice—do as you will with the victim that death mercifully snatches from my grasp. I could have wished to prolong her life, to load it with some fragment of the curse her parents heaped upon me!—baffled love, and ruin, and despair!—I could have hoped in this division of the spoil, that mine had been the vengeance, if yours the gold. You want the life—I the heart;—the heart to torture first, and then—why then—more willingly than I do now, could I have thrown the carcass to the jackal!"

"Listen!" began Varney, when the door opened, and Helen herself stood unconsciously smiling at the threshold.

CHAPTER VI.

The Lawyer and the Body-snatcher.

THAT same evening, Beck, according to appointment, met Percival, and showed him the dreary-looking house, which held the fair stranger who had so attracted his youthful fancy. And Percival looked at the high walls, with the sailor's bold desire for adventure, while confused visions reflected from plays, operas, and novels, in which scaling walls with rope ladders and dark lanterns, was represented as the natural avocation of a lover, flitted across his brain;—and certainly he gave a deep sigh, as his common sense plucked him back from such romance. However, having

now ascertained the house, it would be easy to learn the name of its inmates, and to watch or make his opportunity. As slowly and reluctantly he walked back to the spot where he had left his cabriolet, he entered into some desultory conversation with his strange guide; and the pity he had before conceived for Beck, increased upon him, as he talked and listened. This benighted mind, only illumined by a kind of miserable astuteness, and that 'cunning of the belly' which is born of want to engender avarice—this joyless temperament—this age in youth—this living reproach, rising up from the stones of London against our social indifference to the souls which wither and rot under the hard eyes of science and the deaf ears of wealth, had a pathos for his lively sympathies and his fresh heart.

"If ever you want a friend, come to me," said St. John, abruptly.

The sweeper stared, and a gleam of diviner nature, a ray of gratitude and unselfish devotion, darted through the fog and darkness of his mind. He stood, with his hat off, watching the wheels of the cabriolet, as it bore away the happy child of fortune, and then shaking his head, as at some puzzle that perplexed and defied his comprehension, strode back to the town, and bent his way homeward.

Between two and three hours after, Percival thus parted from the sweeper, a man whose dress was little in accordance with the scene in which we present him, threaded his way through a foul labyrinth of alleys in the worst part of St. Giles's: a neighborhood, indeed, carefully shunned at dusk, by wealthy passengers; for here dwelt not only Penury in its grimmest shape, but the desperate and dangerous Guilt, which is not to be lightly encountered in its haunts and domiciles. Here children imbide vice with their mother's milk. Here Prostitution, commencing with childhood, grows fierce and sanguinary in the teens, and leagues with theft and murder. Here slinks the pickpocket—here emerges the burglar—here skulks the felon. Yet all about and all around, here, too, may be found virtue in its rarest and noblest form—virtue outshining circumstance and defying temptation—the virtue of utter poverty, which groans and yet sins not. So interwoven are these webs of penury and fraud, that in one court your life is not safe, but turn to the right hand, and in the other, you might sleep safely in that worse than Irish shealing, though your pockets were full of gold. Through these haunts, the ragged and penniless may walk unfearing, for they have nothing to dread from the lawless—more, perhaps, from the law; but the wealthy, the respectable, the spruce, the dainty, let them beware the spot, unless the policeman is in sight, or day is in the skies!

As this passenger, whose appearance, as we have implied, was certainly not that of a denizen, turned into one of the alleys, a rough hand seized him by the arm, and suddenly a group of girls and tatterdemalions issued from a house, in which the lower shutters unclosed, showed a light burning, and surrounded him with a hoarse whoop.

The passenger whispered a word in the ear of the grim blackguard who had seized him, and his arm was instantly released.

"Hist! a pal: he has the catch," said the blackguard, surily. The group gave way, and by the light of the clear star-lit skies and a single lamp, hung at the entrance of the alley, gazed upon the stranger. But they made no effort to detain him; and as he disappeared in the distant shadows, hastened back into the wretched hostelry, where they had been merry-making. Meanwhile, the stranger gained a narrow court, and stopped before a house in one of its angles—a house taller than the rest—so much taller than the rest, that it had the effect of a tower; you would have supposed it (perhaps, rightly) to be the last remains of some ancient building of importance, around which, as population thickened and fashion changed, the huts below it had insolently sprung up. Quaint and massive pilasters, black with the mire and soot of centuries, flanked the deep-set door: the windows were heavy with mullions and transoms, and strongly barred in the lower floor; but few of the panes were whole, and only here and there had any attempt, been made to keep out the wind and rain by rags, paper, old shoes, old hats, and other ingenious contrivances. Beside the door was conveniently placed a row of some ten or twelve bell pulls, appertaining no doubt to the various lodgements into which the building was subdivided. The stranger did not seem very familiar with the appurtenances of the place. He stood in some suspense, as to the proper bell to select, but at last guided by

a brass-plate annexed to one of the pulls, which, though it was too dark to decipher the inscription, denoted a claim to superior gentility than the rest of that nameless class, he hazarded a tug, which brought forth a larum loud enough to startle the whole court from its stillness.

In a minute or less, the casement in one of the upper stories opened, a head peered forth, and one of those voices peculiar to low debauch —raw, cracked, and hoarse—called out, "Who waits?"

"Is it you, Grabman?" asked the stranger dubiously.

"Yes; Nicolas Grabman, attorney-at-law, sir, at your service: and your name?"

"Jason," answered the stranger.

"Ho! there—ho! Beck," cried the cracked voice to some one within; "go down and open the door."

In a few moments the heavy portal swung and creaked, and yawned sullenly, and a gaunt form, half-undressed, with an inch of a farthing rushlight, glimmering through a battered lantern, in its hand, presented itself to Jason. The last eyed the ragged porter sharply.

"Do you live here?"

"Yes," answered Beck, with the cringe habitual to him. "H-up the ladder, with the rats, drat'em."

"Well, lead on—hold up the lantern; a devil of a dark place this!" grumbled Jason, as he nearly stumbled over sundry broken chattels, and gained a flight of rude, black, broken stairs, that creaked under his tread.

"'St! 'st!" said Beck, between his teeth, as the stranger, halting at the second floor, demanded, in no gentle tones, whether Mr. Grabman lived in the chimney-pots.

"'St! 'st!—don't make such a rumpus, or No. 7 will be at you.'

"What do I care for No 7? and who the devil is No. 7?"

"A Body-snatcher!" whispered Beck, with a shudder. "He's a dillicut sleeper, and can't abide having his night's rest sp'lt. And he's the houtrageoustest great cretur, when he's h-up in his tantrums—it makes your hair stand on ind to hear him!"

"I shonld like very much to hear him, then," said the stranger curiously. And while he spoke, the door of No. 7 opened abruptly. A huge head, covered with matted hair, was thrust for a moment through the aperture, and two dull eyes, that seem covered with a film, like that of the birds which feed on the dead, met the stranger's bold sparkling orbs.

"Hell and fury," bawled out the voice of this ogre, like a clap of near thunder, "if you two keep—tramp, tramp there, close at my door, I'll make you meat for the surgeons—b—— you!"

"Stop a moment, my civil friend," said the stranger, advancing; "just stand where you are; I should like to make a sketch of your head."

That head protruded farther from the door, and with it an enormous bulk of chest and shoulder. But the adventurous visitor was not to be daunted. He took out, very coolly, a pencil, and the back of a letter, and began his sketch.

The body-snatcher stared at him an instant, in mute astonishment; but that operation and the composure of the artist were so new to him, that they actually inspired him with terror. He slunk back—banged-to the door. And the stranger, putting up his implements, said, with a disdainful laugh, to Beck, who had slunk away into a corner—

"No. 7 knows well how to take care of No. 1. Lead on, and be quick then!"

As they continued to mount, they heard the body-snatcher growling and blaspheming in his den, and the sound made Beck clamber the quicker, till at the next landing-place, he took breath, threw open a door, and Jason, pushing him aside, entered first.

The interior of the room bespoke better circumstances than might have been supposed from the approach: the floor was covered with sundry scraps of carpets, formerly of different hues and patterns, but mellowed by time into one threadbare mass of grease and canvas. There was a good fire on the hearth, though the night was warm: there were sundry volumes piled round the walls, in the binding peculiar to law books; in a corner, stood a tall desk, of the fashion used by clerks, perched on tall slim legs, and companioned by a tall slim stool. On a table before the fire, were scattered the remains of the nightly meal; broiled bones, the skeleton of a herring; and the steam rose from a tumbler, containing a liquid, colorless as water, but poisonous as gin.

The room was squalid and dirty, and bespoke mean and slovenly habits, but it did not bespeak penury and want; it had even an air of filthy comfort of its own—the comfort of the swine in its warm sty. The occupant of the chamber was in keeping with the localities. Figure to yourself a man of middle height—not thin, but void of all muscular flesh, bloated, puffed, unwholesome. He was dressed in a gray flannel gown and short breeches, the stockings wringled and distained, the feet in slippers. The stomach was that of a portly man, the legs those of a skeleton; the cheeks full and swollen, like a plough-boy's, but livid, bespeckled, of a dull lead-color, like a patient in the dropsy. The head, covered in patches with thin, yellowish hair, gave some promise of intellect, for the forehead was high, and appeared still more so from partial baldness; the eyes, embedded in fat and wrinkled skin, were small and lustreless, but they still had that acute look which education and ability communicate to the human orb; the mouth most showed the animal—full-lipped,—coarse, and sensual; while, behind one of two great ears stuck a pen.

You see before you, then, this slatternly figure—slip-shod, half-clothed, with a sort of shabby-demigentility about it—half ragamuffin, half clerk; while, in strong contrast, appeared the new-comer, scrupulously neat, new—with bright black satin stock, coat cut jauntily to the waist, varnished boots, kid gloves, and trim moustache.

Behind this sleek and comely personage, on knock-knees, in torn shirt open at the throat, with apathetic, listless, unlighted face, stood the lean and gawkey Beck.

"Set a chair for the gentleman," said the inmate of the chamber to Beck with a dignified wave of the hand.

"How do you do, Mr.—Mr.—humph—Jason?—how do you do?—always smart and blooming—the world thrives with you."

"The world is a farm, that thrives with all who till it properly, Grabman," answered Jason, drily, and with his hankerchief he carefully dusted the chair on which he then daintily deposited his person.

"But who is your Ganymede—your valet, your gentleman usher?"

"Oh! a lad about town, who lodges above! and does odd jobs for me—brushes my coat, cleans my shoes, and, after his day's work, goes an errand now and then. Make yourself scarce, Beck!—Anatomy, vanish!"

Beck grinned, nodded, pulled hard at a flake of his hair, and closed the door.

"One of your brotherhood, that?" asked Jason, carelessly.

"He, oaf!—no," said Grabman, with profound contempt in his sickly visage. "He works for his bread!—instinct!—turnspits, and truffle-dogs, and some silly men have it!—What an age since we met—shall I mix you a tumbler?"

"You know I never drink your vile spirits; though in Champagne and Bordeaux I am any man's match."

"And how the devil do you keep old black thoughts out or your mind by those washy potations?"

"Old black thoughts!—of what?"

"Of black actions, Jason. We have not met since you paid me for recommending the nurse who attended your uncle in his last illness?'

"Well, poor coward?"

Grabman knit his thin eyebrows, and gnawed his blubber lip—

"I am no coward, as you know."

"Not when a thing is to be done, but after it is done. You brave the substance, and tremble at the shadow. I dare say you see ugly goblins in the dark, Grabman."

"Ay, ay; but it is no use talking to you. You call yourself Jason, because of your yellow hair, or your love for the golden fleece; but your old comrades called you *Rattlesnake*, and you have its blood, as its venom."

"And its charm, man," added Jason, with a strange smile, that, though hypocritical and constrained, had yet a certain softness, and added greatly to the comeliness of features, which many might call beautiful, and all would allow to be regular and symmetrical. "I shall find at least ten love-letters on my table, when I go home. But enough of these fopperies: I am here on business."

"Law, of course; I am your man—who's the victim?" and a hideous grin on Grabman's face contrasted the sleek smile that yet lingered upon his visitor's.

"No; something less hazardous, but not less lucrative than our old practices. This is a business that may bring you hundreds,

thousands—that may take you from this hovel, to speculate at the West End—that may change your gin into Lafitte, and your herring into venison—that may lift the broken attorney again upon the wheel,—again to roll down, it may be; but that is your affair."

"'Fore Gad, open the case," cried Grabman, eagerly, and shoving aside the ignoble relics of his supper, he leaned his elbows on the table, and his chin on his damp palms, while eyes, that positively brightened into an expression of greedy and relentless intelligence, were fixed upon his visitor.

"The case runs thus," said Jason: "Once upon a time, there lived, at an old house in Hampshire, called Laughton, a wealthy baronet named St. John. He was a bachelor—his estates at his own disposal. He had two nieces and a more distant kinsman. His eldest niece lived with him—she was supposed to be destined for his heiress; circumstances, needless to relate, brought upon this girl her uncle's displeasure—she was dismissed his house. Shortly afterwards he died, leaving to his kinsman—a Mr. Vernon—his estates, with remainder to Mr. Vernon's issue, and, in default thereof — first, to the issue of the younger niece, next to that of the elder and disinherited one. The elder married, and was left a widow, without children. She married *again*, and had a son. Her second husband, for some reason or other, conceived ill opinions of his wife. In his last illness (he did not live long) he resolved to punish the wife by robbing the mother. He sent away the son—nor have we been able to discover him since. It is that son whom you are to find."

"I see, I see!—go on," said Grabman. "This son is now the remainder-man. How lost?—when?—what year?—what trace?"

"Patience! You will find in this paper the date of the loss, and the age of the child, then a mere infant. Now for the trace. This husband—did I tell you his name?—no—Alfred Braddell—had one friend more intimate than the rest—John Walter Ardworth, a cashiered officer, a ruined man, pursued by bill-brokers, Jews and bailiffs. To this man we have lately had reason to believe that the child was given. Ardworth, however, was shortly afterwards obliged to fly his creditors. We know that he went to India, but if residing there, it must have been under some new name, and we fear he is now dead. All our inquiries at least, after this man—have been fruitless. Before he went abroad, he left with his old tutor a child, corresponding in age to that of Mrs. Braddell's. In this child, she thinks she recognizes her son. All that you have to do is to trace his idenity, by good legal evidence—don't smile in that foolish way—I mean sound *bonâ fide* evidence, that will stand the fire of cross-examination; you know what *that* is! You will therefore find out—first, whether Braddell did consign his child to Ardworth, and, if so, you must then follow Ardworth, with that child in his keeping, to Matthew Fielden's house, whose address you find noted in the paper I gave you, together with many other memoranda as to Ardworth's creditors, and those whom he is likely to have come across."

"John Ardworth, I see!

"John *Walter* Ardworth, commonly called Walter; he, like me, preferred to be known only by his second baptismal name. He, because of a favorite Radical godfather—I, because Honoré is an inconvenient Gallicism, and perhaps, when Honoré Mirabeau *my* (godfather) went out of fashion with the sans-culottes, my father thought Gabriel a safer designation. Now I have told you all!"

"What is the mother's maiden name?"

"Her maiden name was Clavering; she was married under that of Dalibard, her first husband."

"And," said Grabman, looking over the notes in the paper given to him, "it is at Liverpool that the husband died, and whence the child was sent away?"

"It is so; to Liverpool you will go first. I tell you fairly, the task is difficult, for hitherto it has foiled me. I knew but one man who, without flattery, could succeed; and therefore I spared no pains to find out Nicholas Grabman. You have the true ferret's faculty; you, too, are a lawyer, and snuff evidenee in every breath. Find up a son—a legal son—a son to be shown in a court of law, and the moment he steps into the lands and the Hall of Laughton, you have 5000*l.*"

"Can I have a bond to that effect?

"My bond I fear is worth no more than my word. Trust to the last:—if I break it you know enough of my secrets to hang me!"

"Don't talk of hanging—I hate that sub-

ject. But stop—if found, does this son succeed? Did this Mr. Vernon leave no heir—this other sister continue single, or prove barren?"

"Oh, true! he, Mr Vernon, who by will took the name of St. John,—he left issue—but only one son still survives, a minor and unmarried. The sister, too, left a daughter; both are poor sickly creatures—their lives not worth a straw. Never mind them. You find Vincent Braddell, and he will not be long out of his property, nor you out of your 5000*l.*! You see, under there circumstances, a bond might become dangerous evidence!"

Graham emitted a fearful and tremulous chuckle—a laugh, like the laugh of a superstitious man when you talk to him of ghosts and churchyards. He chuckled—and his hair bristled! But, after a pause, in which he seemed to wrestle with his own conscience, he said—"Well, well—you are a strange man, Jason, you love your joke—I have nothing to do, except to find out this ultimate remainderman—mind that!"

"Perfectly; nothing like subdivision of labor."

"The search will be expensive!"

"There is oil for your wheels," answered Jason, putting a note-book into his confidant's hands. "But mind, you waste it not; no tricks, no false play with me; you know Jason, or if you like the name better, you know the Rattlesnake!"

"I will account for every penny," said Grabman, eagerly, and clasping his hands, while his pale face grew livid.

"I do not doubt it, my quill-driver. Look sharp, start to-morrow! Get thyself decent clothes, be sober, cleanly, and respectable. Act as a man who sees before him five thousand pounds. And, now light me downstairs."

With the candle in his hand, Grabman stole down the rugged steps, even more timorously than Beck had ascended them, and put his finger to his mouth as they came in the dread vicinity of No. 7. But Jason, or rather Gabriel Varney, with that fearless, reckless bravado of temper, which, while causing half his guilt, threw at times a false glitter over its baseness, piqued by the cowardice of his comrade—gave a lusty kick at the closed door, and shouted out—"Old Grave-stealer, come out, and let me finish your picture. Out, out!—I say—out!" Grabman left the candle on the steps, and made but three bounds to his own room.

At the third shout of his disturber, the Resurrection-man threw open his door, violently, and appeared at the gap—the upward flare of the candle showing the deep lines ploughed in his hideous face and the immense strength of his gigantic trunk and limbs. Slight, fair, and delicate as he was, Varney eyed him deliberately, and trembled not.

"What do you want with me?" said the terrible voice, tremulous with rage.

"Only to finish your portrait, as Pluto. He was the god of Hell, you know!"

The next moment, the vast hand of the ogre hung like a great cloud over Gabriel Varney. This last, ever on his guard, sprang aside, and the light gleamed on the steel of a pistol. "Hands off!—or——"

The click of the pistol-cock finished the sentence. The ruffian halted. A glare of disappointed fury gave a momentary lustre to his dull eyes. "P'raps, I shall meet you agin one o' these days, or nights, and I shall know ye in ten thousand."

"Nothing like a bird in the hand, Master Grave-stealer! Where can *we* ever meet again?"

"P'raps in the fields—p'raps on the road—p'rays at the Old Bailey—p'raps at the gallows—p'raps in the convict-ship, I knows what *that* is! I was chained night and day once to a chap jist like you—didn't I break his spurit—didn't I spile his sleep! Ho, ho!—you looks a bit less varmently howdacious now—my flash cove!"

Varney hitherto had not known one pang of fear, one quicker beat of the heart before. But the image presented to his irritable fancy (always prone to brood over terrors)—the image of that companion—chained to him night and day—suddenly quelled his courage—the image stood before him palpably like the *Oulos Oneiros*—the Evil Dream of the Greeks.

He breathed loud. The body-stealer's stupid sense saw that he had produced the usual effect of terror, which gratified his brutal self-esteem; he retreated slowly, inch by inch, to the door, followed by Varney's appalled and staring eye—and closed it with such violence, that the candle was extinguished.

Varney, not daring—yes literally, not daring—to call aloud to Grabman for another light, crept down the dark stairs with hurried, ghost-like steps—and, after groping at the door-handle with one hand, while the other grasped his pistol, with a strain of horror, he succeeded at last in winning access to the street, and stood a moment to collect himself, in the open air—the damps upon his forehead, and his limbs trembling like one who has escaped by a hair-breadth the crash of a falling house.

CHAPTER VII.

The Rape of the Mattress.

THAT Mr. Grabman slept calmly that night, is probable enough, for his gin-bottle was empty the next morning; and it was with eyes more than usually heavy that he dozily followed the movements of Beck, who, according to custom, opened the shutters of the little den adjoining his sitting-room, brushed his clothes, made his fire, set on the kettle to boil, and laid his breakfast-things, preparatory to his own departure to the duties of the day. Stretching himself, however, and shaking off slumber, as the remembrance of the enterprise he had undertaken glanced pleasantly across him, Grabman sat up in his bed, and said in a voice that if not maudlin was affectionate, and if not affectionate was maudlin,—

"Beck, you are a good fellow! You have faults—you are human; *humanum est errare*, which means that you sometimes scorch my muffins. But, take you all in all, you are a kind creature. Beck, I am going into the country for some days. I shall leave my key in the hole in the wall—you know; take care of it when you come in. You were out late last night, my poor fellow. Very wrong! Look well to yourself, or who knows, you may be clutched by that blackguard Resurrection-man, No. 7. Well, well! to think of that Jason's fool-hardiness. But he's the worse devil of the two. Eh! what was I saying? And always gave a look into my room every night before you go to roost. The place swarms with cracksmen, and one can't be too cautious. Lucky dog, you, have nothing to be robbed of!"

Beck winced at that last remark. Grabman did not seem to notice his confusion, and proceeded, as he put on his stockings, "And Beck, you are a good fellow, and have served me faithfully; when I come back, I will bring you something handsome—a backey-box—or, who knows, a beautiful silver watch, Meanwhile, I think—let me see—yes, I *can* give you this elegant pair of small-clothes. Put out my best—the black ones. And now, Beck, I'll not keep you any longer."

The poor sweep, with many pulls at his forelock, acknowledged the munificent donation, and having finished all his preparations, hastened first to his room, to examine at leisure, and with great admiration, the drab small-clothes. *Room*, indeed, we can scarcely style the wretched inclosure which Beck called his own. It was at the top of the house, under the roof, and hot—oh, so hot, in the summer! It had one small begrimed window, through which the light of heaven never came, for the parapet, beneath which ran the choked gutter, prevented that. But the rain and the wind came in. So, sometimes, through four glassless panes, came a fugitive tom-cat. As for the rats, they held the place as their own. Accustomed to beck, they cared nothing for him. They were the Mayors of that Palace—he only *le roi faindant*. They ran over his bed at night; he often felt them on his face, and was convinced they would have eaten him, if there had been anything worth eating upon his bones; still, perhaps out of precaution rather than charity, he generally left them a potato or two, or a crust of bread, to take off the edge of their appetites. But Beck was far better off than most who occupied the various settlements in that Alsatia—he had his room to himself. That was necessary to his sole luxury—the inspection of his treasury, the safety of his mattress; for it he paid, without grumbling, what he thought was a very high rent. To this hole in the roof there was no lock,—for a very good reason, there was no door to it. You went up a ladder, as you would go into a loft. Now, it had often been matter of much intense cogitation to Beck, whether or not he should have a door to this chamber; and the result of tho cogitation was invariably the same—he dared not! What should he want with a door—a door with a lock to it—for one followed as a consequence to the other.

Such a novel piece of grandeur would be an ostentatious advertisement that he had something to guard. He could have no pretence for it on the ground that he was intruded on by neighbors; no step but his own was ever caught by him ascending that ladder; it led to no other room. All the offices required for the lodgment he performed himself. His supposed poverty was a bettter safeguard than doors of iron. Besides this, a door, if dangerous, would be superfluous; the moment it was suspected that Beck had something worth guarding, that moment all the picklocks and skeleton keys in the neighborhood would be in a jingle. And a cracksman of high repute lodged already on the ground-floor. So Beck's treasure, like the bird's-nest, was deposited as much out of sight as his instinct could contrive; and the locks and bolts of civilized man were equally dispensed with by bird and Beck.

On a rusty nail the sweep suspended the drab smali clothes stroked them down lovingly, and murmured, "They be's too good for I —I should like to pop 'em! But vouldn't that be a shame? Beck, ben't you a hungrateful beast to go for to think of nothin' but the tin, ven your 'art ought to varm with hemotion? I vill vear 'em ven I waits on him. Ven he sees his own smalls bringing in the muffins, he will say, "Beck, you becomes em!'"

Fraught with this noble resolution, the sweep caught up his broom, crept down the ladder, and, with a furtive glance at the door of the room in which the cracksmen lived, let himself, out, and shambled his way to his crossing. Grabman, in the meanwhile, dressed himself with more care than usual, shaved his beard from a four-days' crop, and while seated at his breakfast, read attentively over the notes which Varney had left to him, pausing at times to make his own pencil memoranda. He then packed up such few articles as so moderate a worshipper of the Graces might require, deposited them in an old blue brief-bag; and this done he opened his door, and creeping to the threshold listened carefully. Below, a few sounds might be heard; here, the wail of a child—there, the shrill scold of a woman, in that accent above all others adapted to scold—the Irish. Farther down still, the deep bass oath of the choleric Resurrection-man; but above, all was silent. Only one floor intervened between Grabman's apartment and the ladder that led to Beck's loft. And the inmates of that room gave no sound of life. Grabman took courage, and, shuffling off his shoes, ascended the stairs; he passed the closed door of the room above—he seized the ladder with a shaking hand—he mounted, step after step,—he stood in Beck's room.

Now, O Nicholas Grabmam, some moralists may be harsh enough to condemn thee for what thou art doing: kneeling yonder, in the dim light, by that curtainless pallet, with greedy fingers feeling here and there, and a placid, self-hugging smile upon thy pale lips. That poor vagabond, whom thou art about to despoil, has served thee well and faithfully, has borne with thine ill humors, thy sarcasms, thy swearings, thy kicks and buffets—often, when in the bestial sleep of drunkenness, he has found thee stretched helpless on thy floor, with a kindly hand he has moved away the sharp fender, too near that knavish head, now bent on his ruin; or closed the open window, lest the keen air, that thy breath tainted, should visit thee with rheum and fever. Small has been his guerdon for uncomplaining sacrifice of the few hours spared to the weary drudge from his daily toil—small, but gratefully received. And if Beck had been taught to pray, he would have prayed for thee, as for a good man, O miserable sinner! And thou art going now, Nicholas Grabman, upon an enterprise which promises thee large gains, and thy purse is filled; and thou wantest nothing for thy wants, or thy swinish luxuries. Why should those shaking fingers itch for the poor beggarman's hoards?

But hadst thou been bound on an errand that would have given thee a million, thou wouldst not have left unrifled that secret store which thy prying eye had discovered, and thy hungry heart had coveted. No; since one night, fatal, alas! to the owner of loft and treasure, when, needing Beck for some service, and fearing to call aloud, (for the Resurrection-man in the floor below thee, whose oaths even now ascend to thine ear, sleeps ill, and has threatened to make thee mute for ever if thou disturbest him in the few nights in which his dismal calling suffers him to sleep at all)—thou didst creep up the ladder, and didst see the unconscious miser at his nightly work, and

after the sight, didst steal down again, smiling —no: since that night, no schoolboy ever more rootedly and ruthlessly set his mind upon nest of linnet, than thi[illegible] was set upon the stores in Beck's mattress.

And yet, why, O lawyer, should rigid moralists blame thee more than such of thy tribe as live honored and respectable, upon the frail and the poor? Who among them ever left loft or mattress while a rap could be wrung from either? Matters it to Astræa, whether the spoliation be made, thus nakedly and briefly, or by all the acknowledged forms in which item on item, six-and-eightpence on six-and-eightpence, the inexorable hand closes, at length, on the last farthing of duped despair? Not—Heaven forbid!—that we make thee, foul Nicholas Grabman, a type for all the class called attorneys-at-law! Noble hearts, liberal minds, are there amongst that brotherhood, we know, and have experienced; but a type art thou of those whom want, and error, and need have proved—alas, too well—the lawyers of the poor. And even while we write, and even while ye read, many a Grabman steals from helpless toil the savings of a life.

Ye poor hoards—darling delights of your [illegible]herwise joyless owner—how easily has his [illegible]ery fondness made ye the prey of the spoiler! How gleefully when the pence swelled into a shilling have they been exchanged into the new bright piece of silver, the newest and brightest that could be got! then the shillings into crowns, then the crowns into gold—got slily and at a distance, and contemplated with what rapture!—so that, at last, the total lay manageable and light in its radiant compass. And what a total!—what a surprise to Grabman! Had it been but a sixpence, he would have taken it; but to grasp sovereigns, by the handful, it was too much for him; and, as he rose, he positively laughed, from a sense of fun.

But amongst his booty, there was found one thing that specially moved his mirth—it was a child's coral, with its little bells. Who could have given Beck such a bauble—or how Beck could have refrained from turning it into money would have been a fit matter for speculation. But it was not that at which Grabman chuckled; he laughed, first, because it was an emblem of the utter childishness and folly of the creature he was leaving penniless; and, secondly, because it furnished his ready wit with a capital contrivance to shift Beck's indignation from his own shoulders to a party more liable to suspicion. He left the coral on the floor near the bed, stole down the ladder, reached his own room, took up his brief-bag, locked his door, slipped the key in the rat-hole, where the trusty, plundered Beck alone could find it, and went boldly down stairs; passing successively the doors, within which still stormed the Resurrection-man, still wailed the child, still shrieked the Irish shrew; he paused at the grouud-floor occupied by Bill the cracksman, and his long-fingered, slender, quick-eyed imps, trained already to pass through broken window panes, on their precocious progress to the hulks.

The door was open, and gave a pleasant sight of the worthy family within. Bill, himself, a stout-looking fellow, with a florid, jolly, countenance, and a pipe in his mouth, was sitting at his window, with his brawny legs lolling on a table covered with the remains of a very tolerable breakfast. Four small Bills were employed in certain sports, which no doubt, according to the fashionable mode of education, instilled useful lessons under the artful guise of playful amusement. Against the wall, at one corner of the room, was affixed a row of bells, from which were suspended exceedingly tempting apples by slender wires. Two of the boys were engaged in the innocent entertainment of extricating the apples without occasioning any alarm from the bells; a third was amusing himself at a table, covered with mock rings and trinkets, in a way that seemed really surprising; with the end of a finger dipped probably in some glutinous matter, he just touched one of the gew-gaws, and lo, it vanished!—vanished so magically, that the quickest eye could scarcely trace whither; sometimes up a cuff, sometimes into a shoe—here, there, anywhere—except back again upon the table. The fourth, an urchin apparently about five years old; he might be much younger, judging from his stunted size; somewhat older, judging from the vicious acuteness of his face, on the floor under his father's chair, was diving his little hand into the paternal pockets in search for a marble, sportively hidden in those capacious recesses. On the rising geniuses around him, Bill, the cracksman, looked, and his father's heart was proud.

Pausing at the threshold, Grabman looked in, and said, cheerfully, "Good day to you—good day to you all, my little dears."

"Ah, Grabman," said Bill, rising, and making a bow, for Bill valued himself much on his politeness—"come to blow a cloud, eh? Bob!" (this to the eldest born); "manners, sir; wipe your nose, and set a chair for the gent."

"Many thanks to you Bill, but I can't stay now—I have a long journey to take. But bless my soul, how stupid I am; I have forgotten my clothes-brush. I know there was something on my mind all the way I was coming down the stairs. I was saying to myself, 'Grabman, there is something forgotten!'"

"I know what that ere feelin' is," said Bill, thoughtfully; "I had it myself the night afore last; and sure enough when I got to the—— but that's neither here nor there. Bob, run up stairs, and fetch down Mr. Grabman's clothes-brush. 'Tis the least you can do for a gent who saved your father from the fate of them ere innocent apples,—your fist, Grabman. I have a heart in my bozzom;—cut me open, and you will find there '*Halibi* and Grabman!' Give Bob your key."

"The brush is not in my room," answered Grabman; "it is at the top of the house; up the ladder, in Beck's loft—Beck, the sweeper. The stupid dog always keeps it there, and forgot to give it me. Sorry to occasion my friend Bob so much trouble."

"Bob has a soul above trouble; his father's heart beats in his buzzom. Bob, track the dancers. Up like a lark—and down like a dump."

Bob grinned, made a mow at Mr. Grabmam, and scampered up the stairs.

"You never attends our free-and-easy," said Bill; "but we toasts you, with three times three, and up standing. 'Tis a hungrateful world! But some men has a heart; and, to those who has a heart, Grabmam is a trump!"

"I am sure, whenever I can do you a service, you may reckon on me. Meanwhile, if you could get that cursed bullying fellow who lives under me to be a little more civil, you would oblige me."

"Under you? No. 7! No. 7—is it? Grabman, h-am I a man? Is this a h-arm, and this a bunch of fives? I dare's do all that does become a man; but No. 7 is a body-snatcher! No. 7 has bullied me—and I bore it! No. 7 might whop me—and this h-arm would let him whop! He lives with graves, and churchyards, and stiff 'uns—that damnable No. 7! Ask some'at else, Grabman. I dares not touch No. 7 any more than the ghosteses."

Grabman sneered as he saw that Bill, stout rogue as he was, turned pale while he spoke; but at that moment Bob reappeared with the clothes-brush, which the ex-attorney thrust into his pocket; and shaking Bill by the hand, and patting Bob on the head, he set out on his journey.

Bill reseated himself, muttering, "Bully a body-snatcher! 'drot that Grabman, does he want to get rid of poor Bill?"

Meanwhile Bob exhibited slily, to his second brother, the sight of Beck's stolen coral. The childen took care not to show it to their father. They were already inspired by the laudable ambition to set up in business on their own account.

CHAPTER VIII.

Percival visits Lucretia.

HAVING once ascertained the house in which Helen lived, it was no difficult matter for St. John to learn the name of the guardian whom Beck had supposed to be her mother. No common delight mingled with Percival's amaze, when in that name he recognized one borne by his own kinswoman. Very little, indeed, of the family history was known to him. Neither his father nor his mother ever willingly conversed of the fallen heiress—it was a subject which the children had felt to be proscribed, but in the neighborhood, Percival had, of course, heard some mention of Lucretia as the haughty and accomplished Miss Clavering—who had, to the astonishment of all, stooped to a *mésalliance* with her uncle's French librarian. That her loss of the St. John property the succession of Percival's father, were unexpected by the villagers and squires around, and perhaps set down to the caprice of Sir Miles, or to an intellect impaired by apoplectic attacks, it was not likely that he should have heard. The rich have the polish of their education, and the poor that instinctive tact so wonderful amongst the agricultural peasantry,

to prevent such unmannerly disclosures or unwelcome hints; and, both by rich and poor, the Vernon St. Johns were too popular and respected for wanton allusions to subjects calculated to pain them. All, therefore, that Percival knew of his relation, was that she had resided from infancy with Sir Miles; that after their uncle's death, she had married an inferior in rank, of the name of Dalibard, and settled abroad; that she was a person of peculiar manners; and, he had heard somewhere, of rare gifts. He had been unable to learn the name of the young lady staying with Madame Dalibard; he had learned only that she went by some other name, and was not the daughter of the lady who rented the house. Certainly, it was possible that this last might not be his kinswoman, after all. The name, though strange to English ears, and not common in France, was no sufficient warrant for Percival's high spirits at the thought that he had now won legitimate and regular access to the house —still it allowed him to call; it furnished a fair excuse for a visit.

How long he was at his toilet that day, poor boy! How sedulously, with comb and brush, he sought to smoothe into straight precision that luxuriant labyrinth of jetty curls, which had never cost him a thought before! Gil Blas says that the toilet is a pleasure to the young though a labor to the old; Percival St. John's toilet was no pleasure to him that anxious morning.

At last, he tore himself, dissatisfied and desperate, from the glass, caught his hat and his whip, threw himself on his horse, and rode, at first very fast and at last very slowly, to the old, decayed, shabby, neglected house, that lay hid, like the poverty of fallen pride, amidst the trim villas and smart cottages of fair and flourishing Brompton.

The same servant who had opened the gate to Ardworth appeared to his summons, and, after eyeing him for some moments with a listless stupid stare, said, "You'll be after some mistake!" and turned away.

"Stop—stop!" cried Percival, trying to intrude himself through the gate; but the servant blocked up the entrance sturdily. "It is no mistake at all, my good lady. I have come to see Madame Dalibard, my—my relation! '

"Your relation!" and again the woman stared at Percival with a look through the dull vacancy of which some distrust was dimly perceptible. "Bide a bit there, and give us your name."

Percival gave his card to the servant, with his sweetest and most persuasive smile. She took it with one hand, and, with the other, turned the key in the gate, leaving Percival outside. It was five minutes before she returned, and she then, with the same prim, smileless expression of countenance opened the gate, and motioned him to follow.

The kind-hearted boy sighed as he cast a glance at the desolate and poverty-stricken appearance of the house, and thought within himself—"Ah, pray Heaven, she may be my relation, and then I shall have the right to find her, and that sweet girl, a very different home!" The old woman threw open the drawing-room door, and Percival was in the presence of his deadliest foe! The armchair wus turned towards the entrance, and from amidst the coverings that hid the form, the remarkable countenance of Madame Dalibard emerged, sharp and earnest, directly fronting the intruder.

"So," she said slowly, and, as it were, devouring him with her keen, steadfast eyes —"so, you are Percival St. John! Welcome! I did not know that we should ever meet. I have not sought you—you seek me! Strange —yes, strange—that the young and the rich should seek the suffering and the poor!"

Surprised and embarrassed by this singular greeting, Percival halted abruptly in the middle of the room; and there was something inexpressibly winning in his shy, yet graceful confusion. It seemed, with silent eloquence, to apologize and to deprecate. And when, in his silvery voice, scarcely yet tuned to the fulness of manhood, he said, feelingly, "Forgive me, Madam, but my mother is not in England,"—the excuse evinced such delicacy of idea, so exquisite a sense of high breeding, that the calm assurance of worldly ease could not have more attested the chivalry of the native gentleman.

"I have nothing to forgive, Mr. St. John," said Lucretia, with a softened manner. "Pardon me rather, that my infirmities do not allow me to rise to receive you. This seat,—here,—next to me. You have a strong likeness to your father."

Percival received this last remark as a or

pliment, and bowed. Then, as he lifted his ingenuous brow, he took, for the first time, a steady view of his new found relation. The peculiarities of Lucretia's countenance in youth had natutally deepened with middle-age. The contour, always too sharp and pronounced, was now strong and bony as a man's: the line between the eyebrows was hollowed into a furrow. The eye retained its old uneasy, sinister, side-long glance; or, at rare moments, (as when Percival entered), its searching penetration, and assured command; but the eyelids themselves, red and injected, as with grief or vigil, gave something haggard and wild, whether to glance or gaze. Despite the paralysis of the frame, the face, though pale and thin, showed no bodily decay. A vigor surpassing the strength of woman, might still be seen in the play of the bold muscles, the firmness of the contracted lips. What physicians call '*vitality*,' and trace at once (if experienced) on the physiognomy, as the prognostic of long life, undulated restlessly in every aspect of the face, every movement of those thin nervous hands, which, contrasting the rest of that motionless form, never seemed to be at rest. The teeth were still white and regular, as in youth; and when they shone out in speaking, gave a strange, unnatural freshness to a face otherwise so worn.

As Percival gazed, and, while gazing, saw those wandering eyes bent down, and yet *felt* they watched him, a thril, almost of fear, shot through his heart. Nevertheless, so much more impressionable was he to charitable and trustful, than to suspicious and timid emotions, that, when Madame Dalibard, suddenly looking up, and shaking her head gently, said—

"You see but a sad wreck, young kinsman," all those instincts, which nature itself seemed to dictate for self-preservation, vanished into heavenly tenderness and pity.

"Ah!" he said, rising and pressing one of those deadly hands in both his own, while tears rose to his eyes. "Ah! since you call me kinsman, I have all a kinsman's privileges. You must have the best advice—the most skilful surgeons. Oh, you will recover—you must not despond."

Lucretia's lips moved uneasily. This kindness took her by surprise. She turned desperately away from the human gleam that shot across the sevenfold gloom of her soul: "Do not think of me," she said, with a forced smile: "it is my peculiarity not to like allusion to myself, though this time I provoked it. Speak to me of the old cedar trees at Laughton—do they stand still? You are the master of Laughton, now:—it is a noble heritage!"

Then, St. John, thinking to please her, talked of the old manor-house, described the improvements made by his father, spoke gaily of those which he himself contemplated; and as he ran on, Lucretia's brow, a moment ruffled, grew smooth and smoother, and the gloom settled back apon her soul.

All at once, she interrupted him. "How did you discover me—was it through Mr. Varney! I bade him not mention me—yet how else could you learn?" As she spoke, there was an anxious trouble in her tone, which increased, while she observed that St. John looked confused.

"Why," he began, hesitatingly, and brushing his hat with his hand; "why—perhaps you may have heard from the—that is—I think there is a young——. Ah, it is you—it is you! I see you once again!" And springing up, he was at the side of Helen, who at that instant had entered the room, and now, her eyes downcast, her cheeks blushing, her breast gently heaving,—heard, but answered not that passionate burst of joy.

Startled, Madame Dalibard (her hands firmly grasping the sides of her chair) contemplated the two. She had heard nothing, guessed nothing of their former meeting. All that had passed before between them was unknown to her. Yet, there, was evidence unmistakeable, conclusive—the son of her despoiler loved the daughter of her rival, and—if the virgin heart speaks by the outward sign—those downcast eyes, those blushing cheeks, that heaving breast, told that he did not love in vain!

Before her lurid and murderous gaze, as if to defy her, the two inheritors of a revenge unglutted by the grave—stood, united mysteriously together. Up, from the vast ocean of her hate, rose that poor isle of love; there, unconscious of the horror around them—the victims found their footing! How beautiful at that hour their youth—their very ignorance of their own emotions—their innocent gladness—their sweet trouble! The fell gazer drew a long breath of fiendlike complacency

and glee, and her hands opened wide, and then slowly closed, as if she felt them in her grasp.

CHAPTER IX.

The Rose Beneath the Upas.

AND from that day, Percival had his privileged entry into Madame Dalibard's house. The little narrative of the circumstances connected with his first meeting with Helen, partly drawn from Percival, partly afterwards from Helen (with blushing and faltering excuses from the latter, for not having mentioned before an incident that might, perhaps needlessly, vex or alarm her aunt in so delicate a state of health), was received by Lucretia with rare graciousness. The connection, not only between herself and Percival, but between Percival and Helen, was allowed, and even dwelt upon by Madame Dalibard, as a natural reason for permitting the artless intimacy which immediately sprang up between these young persons. She permitted Percival to call daily, to remain for hours, to share in their simple meals, to wander alone with Helen in the garden, assist her to bind up the ragged flowers, and sit by her in the old ivy-grown arbor, when their work was done. She affected to look upon them both as children, and to leave them to that happy familiarity which childhood only sanctions, and compared to which the affection of maturer years seems at once seems coarse and cold.

As they grew more familiar, the differences and similarities in their characters came out, and nothing more delightful than the harmony into which even the contrasts blended, ever invited the guardian angel to pause and smile. As flowers in some trained parterre relieve each other, now softening, now heightening each several hue, till all unite in one concord of interwoven beauty, so these two blooming natures, brought together, seemed, where varying still, to melt and fuse their affluences into one wealth of innocence and sweetness. Both had a native buoyancy and cheerfulness of spirit, a noble trustfulness in others, a singular candor, and freshness of mind and feeling. But beneath the gaiety of Helen, there was a soft and holy under-stream of thoughtful melancholy, a high and religious sentiment that vibrated more exquisitely to the subtle mysteries of creation—the solemn unison between the bright world without, and gave destinies of that world within (which is an imperishable soul), than the lighter and more vivid youthfulness of Percival had yet conceived. In him, lay the germs of the active mortal, who might win distinction in the bold career we run upon the surface of the earth. In her, there was that finer and more spiritual essence which lifts the poet to the golden atmosphere of dreams, and reveals in glimpses to the saint the choral Populace of Heaven. We do not say that Helen would ever have found the utterance of the poet, that her reveries, undefined and unanalyzed, could have taken the sharp, clear form of words.

For to the poet, practically developed and made manifest to the world, many other gifts, besides the mere poetic sense, are needed; stern study, and logical generalization of scattered truths, and patient observation of the characters of men, and the wisdom that comes from sorrow and passion, and a sage's experience of things actual, embracing the dark secrets of human infirmity and crime. But, despite all that has been said in disparagement or disbelief of "mute inglorious Miltons," we maintain that there are natures in which the divinest element of poetry exists, the purer and more delicate for escaping from bodily form, and evaporating from the coarser vessels into which the poet, so called, must pour the ethereal fluid. There is a certain virtue within us, comprehending our subtlest and noblest emotions, which is poetry while untold, and grows pale and poor in proportion as we strain it into poems. Nay, it may be said of this airy property of our inmost being, that, more or less, it departs from us, according as we give it forth into the world, even, as only by the loss of its particles, the rose wastes its perfume on the air. So this more spiritual sensibility dwelt in Helen, as the latent mesmerism in water, as the invisible fairy is an enchanted ring. It was an essence or divinity. shrined and shrouded in herself, which gave her more intimate and vital union with all the influences of the universe, a companion to her loneliness, an angel hymning low to her own listening soul. This made her enjoyment of Nature, in its merest trifles, exquisite and profound; this gave to her tenderness of heart all

the delicious and sportive variety love borrows from imagination; this lifted her piety above the mere forms of conventional religion, and breathed into her prayers the ecstacy of the saint.

But Helen was not the less filled with the sweet humanities of her age and sex; her very gravity was tinged with rosy light, as a western cloud with the sun. She had sportiveness, and caprice, and even whim, as the butterfly, though the emblem of the soul, still flutters wantonly over every wild flower, and expands its glowing wings on the sides of the beaten road. And with a sense of weakness in the common world, (growing out of her very strength in nobler atmospheres), she leaned the more trustfully on the strong arm of her young adorer; not fancying that the difference between them arose from superiority in her,—but rather as a bird once tamed, flies at the sight of the hawk to the breast of its owner; so from each airy flight into the loftier heaven, let but the thought of danger daunt her wing, and, as in a more powerful nature, she took refuge on that fostering heart.

The love between these children, for so, if not literally in years, in their newness to all that steals the freshness and the dew from maturer life, they may be rightly called, was such as befitted those whose souls have not forfeited the Eden. It was more like the love of fairies than of human beings. They showed it to each other; innocently and frankly: yet of love, as we of the grosser creation call it, with its impatient pains, and burning hopes, they never spoke nor dreamed. It was an unutterable, ecstatic fondness—a clingiug to each other—in thought, desire and heart—a joy more than mortal in each other's presence; yet, in parting, not that idle and empty sorrow which unfits the weak for the homelier demands on time and life. And this, because of the wondrous trust in themselves, and in the future, which made a main part of the credulous happy natures. Neither felt fear nor jealousy—or if jealousy came, it was the pretty child-like jealousies which have no sting—of the bird if Helen listened to its note too long—of the flower, if Percival left Helen's side too quickly, to tie up its drooping petals, or refresh its dusty leaves. Close by the stir of the great city, with all its fret, and chafe, and storm of life—in the desolate garden of that sombre house, and under the whithering eyes of relentless Crime, revived the Arcady of old—the scene vocal to the reeds of idyllist and shepherd: and in the midst of the iron Tragedy, harmlessly and unconsciously arose the strain of the Pastoral Music.

It would be a vain effort to describe the state of Lucretia's mind, while she watched the progress of the affection she had favored, and gazed on the spectacle of the fearless happiness she had promoted. The image of a felicity at once so great and so holy, wore to her gloomy sight the aspect of a mocking Fury. It rose in contrast to her own ghastly and crime-stained life; it did not upbraid her conscience with guilt so loudly as it scoffed at her intellect for folly. These children, playing on the verge of life, how much more of life's true secret did they already know, then she, with all her vast native powers and wasted realms of blackened and charred experience? For what had she studied, and schemed, and calculated, and toiled, and sinned? As a conqueror stricken unto death would render up all the regions vanquished by his sword for one drop of water to his burning lips, how gladly would she have given all the knowledge bought with blood and fire, to feel one moment as those children felt! Then, from out her silent and grim despair, stood forth, fierce and prominent, the great fiend, Revenge.

By a monomania, not uncommon to those who have made *self* the centre of being, Lucretia referred to her own sullen history of wrong and passion, all that bore analogy to it, however distant. She had never been enabled, without an intolerable pang of hate and envy, to contemplate courtship and love in others. From the rudest shape to the most refined—that master-passion in the existence, at least, of woman—reminding her of her own brief episode of human tenderness and devotion opened every wound, and wrung every fibre of a heart that, while crime had indurated it to most emotions, memory still left morbidly sensitive to one. But if tortured by the sight of love in those who had had no connection with her fate—who stood apart from her lurid orbit, and were gazed upon only afar, (as a lost soul, from the abyss, sees the gleam of angels' wings within some planet it never has explored), how ineffably more fierce and intolerable was the wrath that seized her, when, in her haunted

imagination, she saw all Susan's rapture at the vows of Mainwaring mantling in Helen's face! All that might have disarmed a heart as hard, but less diseased, less preoccupied by revenge, only irritated more the consuming hate of that inexorable spirit. Helen's seraphic purity—her exquisite overflowing kindness, ever forgetting self—her airy cheerfulness—even her very moods of melancholy, calm and seemingly causeless as they were, perpetually galled and blistered that writhing preternatural susceptibility which is formed by the consciousness of infamy, the dreary egotism of one cut off from the charities of the world, with whom all mirth is sardonic convulsion, all sadness, rayless, and unresigned despair.

Of the two, Percival inspired her with feelings the most akin to humanity. For him, despite her bitter memories of his father, she felt something of compassion, and shrunk from the touch of his frank hand in remorse. She had often need to whisper to herself, that his life was an obstacle to the heritage of the son; of whom, as we have seen, she was in search, and whom, indeed, she believed she had already found in John Ardworth; that it was not in wrath and in vengeance that *this* victim was to be swept into the grave, but as an indispensable sacrifice to a cherished object—a determined policy. As in the studies of her youth, she had adopted the Machiavelism of ancient state-craft as a rule admissible in private life, so she seemed scarcely to admit as a crime that which was but the removal of a barrier between her aim and her end. Before she had become personally acquainted with Percival, she had rejected all occasion to know him. She had suffered Varney to call upon him, as the old *protegé* of Sir Miles, and to wind into his intimacy—meaning to leave to her accomplice, when the hour should arrive, the dread task of destruction. This, not from cowardice, for Gabriel had once rightly described her when he said, that "if she lived with shadows she could quell them," but simply because, more intellectually unsparing than constitutionally cruel, (save where the old vindictive memories thoroughly unsexed her), this was a victim whose pangs she desired not to witness, over whose fate it was no luxury to gloat and revel. She wished not to see, nor to know him *living*, only to learn that he was no more, and that Helen alone stood between Laughton and her son. Now that he had himself, as if with predestined feet, crossed her threshold—that he, like Helen, had delivered himself into her toils, the hideous guilt, before removed from her hands, became haunting, fronted her face to face, and filled her with a superstitious awe.

Meanwhile, her outward manner to both her meditated victims, if moody and fitful at times, was not such as would have provoked suspicion even in less credulous hearts. From the first entry of Helen under her roof, she had been formal and measured in her welcome—kept her, as it were, aloof, and affected no prodigal superfluity of dissimulation; but she had never been positively harsh or unkind in word or in deed, and had coldly excused herself for the repulsiveness of her manner.

"I am irritable," she said, "from long suffering; I am unsocial from habitual solitude; do not expect from me the fondness and warmth that should belong to our relationship. Do not harass yourself with vain solicitude for one whom all seeming attention but reminds more painfully of infirmity, and who even thus, stricken down, would be independent of all cares not bought and paid for. Be satisfied to live here in all reasonable liberty, to follow your own habits and caprices uncontrolled. Regard me but as a piece of necessary furniture. You can never displease me, but when you notice that I live and suffer."

If Helen wept bitterly at these hard words when first spoken, it was not with anger that her loving heart was so thrown back upon herself. On the contrary, she became inspired with a compassion so great that it took the character of reverence. She regarded this very coldness as a mournful dignity. She felt grateful that one who could thus dispense with, should yet have sought, her. She had heard her mother say that "she had been under great obligations to Lucretia;" and now, when she was forbidden to repay them, even by a kiss on those weary eyelids, a daughter's hand to that sleepless pillow; when, she saw that the barrier first imposed was irremovable—that no time diminished the distance her aunt set between them—that the least approach to the tenderness of service beyond the most casual offices, really seemed but to fret those excitable nerves, and fever the hand, that she ventured timorously to

clasp; she retreated into herself with a sad amaze that increased her pity, and heightened her respect. To her, love seemed so necessary a thing in the helplessness of human life, even when blessed with health and youth, that this rejection of all love in one so bowed and crippled, struck her imagination as something sublime in its dreary grandeur and stoic pride of independence. She regarded it, as of old a tender and pious nun would have regarded the asceticism of some sanctified recluse — as Teresa (had she lived in the same age) might have regarded St. Simon Stylites existing aloft from human sympathy on the roofless summit of his column of stone: And with this feeling she sought to inspire Percival. He had the heart to enter into her compassion, but not the imagination to sympathize with her reverence. Even the repugnant awe that he had first conceived for Madame Dalibard, so bold was he by temperament, he had long since cast off; he recognized only the moroseness and petulance of an habitual invalid, and shook playfully his glossy curls, when Helen, with her sweet seriousness, insisted on his recognizing more.

To this house few, indeed, were the visitors admitted. The Mivers's, whom the benevolent officiousness of Mr. Fielden had originally sent thither to see their young kinswoman, now and then came to press Helen to join some party to the theatre, or Vauxhall, or a *pic-nic* in Richmond park; but when they found their overtures, which had at first been politely accepted by Madame Dalibard, were rejected, they gradually ceased their visits, wounded and indignant.

Certain it was, that Lucretria had, at one time, eagerly caught at their well-meant civilities to Helen—*now* she as abruptly declined them. Why? It would be hard to plumb into all the black secrets of that heart. It would have been but natural to her, who shrank from dooming Helen to no worse calamity than a virgin's grave, to have designed to throw her in such uncongenial guidance, amidst all the manifold temptations of the corrupt city—to have suffered her to be seen, and to be ensnared by those gallants ever on the watch for defenceless beauty; and to contrast with their elegance of mien, and fatal flatteries—the grossness of the companions selected for her, and the unloving discomfort of the home into which she had been thrown. But now that St. John had appeared —that Helen's heart and fancy were steeled alike against more dangerous temptation,—the object to be obtained from the pressing courtesy of Mrs. Mivers existed no more. The vengeance flowed into other channels.

The only other visitors at the house were John Ardworth and Gabriel Varney.

Madame Dalibard watched vigilantly the countenance and manner of Ardworth, when, after presenting him to Percival, she whispered —" I am glad you assured me as to your sentiments for Helen. She has found *there*, the lover you wished for her—'gay and handsome as herself.'"

And, in the sudden paleness that overspread Ardworth's face, in his compressed lips, and convulsive start, she read with unspeakable rage the untold secret of his heart—till the rage gave way to complacency at the thought that the last insult to her wrongs was spared her—that her son (as son she believed he was) could not now, at least, be the successful suitor of her loathed sister's loathed child. Her discovery, perhaps, confirmed her in her countenance to Percival's progressive wooing, and half reconciled her to the pangs it inflicted on herself.

At the first introduction, Ardworth had scareely glanced at Percival. He regarded him, but as the sleek flutterer in the sunshine of fortune. And for the idle, the gay, the fair, the well dressed, and wealthy—the sturdy workman of his own rough way, felt something of the uncharitable disdain which the laborious *have nots* too usually entertain for the prosperous *haves*. But the moment the unwelcome intelligence of Madame Dalibard was conveyed to him, the smooth-faced boy swelled into dignity and importance.

Yet it was not merely as a rival, that tha strong manly heart, after the first natural agony, regarded Percival. No, he looked upon him less with an anger than with interest—as the one in whom Helen's happiness was henceforth to be invested. And to Madame Dalibard's astonishment, for this nature was wholly new to her experience, she saw him, even in that first interview, composing his rough face to smiles, smoothing his bluff imperious accents into courtesy, listening patiently, watching benignly, and at last thrusting his large hand

frankly forth—griping Percival's slender fingers in his own; and then, with an indistinct chuckle, that seemed half laugh and half groan, as if he did not dare to trust himself farther, he made his wonted unceremonious nod, and strode hurriedly from the room.

But he came again, and again, almost daily, for about a fortnight; sometimes, without entering the house, he would join the young people in the garden, assist them with awkward hands in their playful work on the garden, or sit with them in the ivied bower; and, warming more and more each time he came, talk at last with the cordial frankess of an elder brother. There was no disguise in this—he began to love Percival—what would seem more strange to the superficial, to admire him. Genius has a quick perception of the moral qualities; genius which, differing thus from mere talent, is more allied to the heart than to the head, sympathizes genially with goodness. Ardworth respected that young, ingenuous, unpolluted mind: he himself felt better and purer in its atmosphere. Much of the affection he cherished for Helen passed thus beautifully and nobly into his sentiments for the one whom Helen not unworthily preferred. And they grew so fond of him! as the young and gentle ever will grow fond of genius—however rough—once admitted to its companionship!

Percival, by this time, had recalled to his mind, where he had first seen that strong-featured, dark-browed countenance, and he gaily reminded Ardworth of his discourtesy, on the brow of the hill which commanded the view of London. That reminiscence made his new friend writhe; for then, amidst all his ambitious visions of the future, he had seen Helen in the distance—the reward of every labor—the fairest star in his horizon. But he strove stoutly against the regret of the illusion lost; the *vivendi causæ* were left him still, and for the nymph that had glided from his clasp, he clung at least to the laurel that was left in her place. In the folds of his robust fortitude, Ardworth thus wrapped his secret. Neither of his young playmates suspected it. He would have disdained himself if he had so poisoned their pleasure. That he suffered when alone, much and bitterly, is not to be denied; but in that masculine and complete being, Love took but its legitimate rank, amidst the passions and cares of man. It soured no existence—it broke no heart—the wind swept some blossoms from the bough, and tossed wildly the agitated branches from root to summit, but the trunk stood firm.

In some of these visits to Madame Dalibard's Ardworth renewed with her the more private conversation which had so unsettled his past convictions as to his birth, and so disturbed the calm, strong currents of his mind. He was chiefly anxious to learn what conjectures Madame Dalibard had formed as to his parentage, and what ground there was for belief that he was near in blood to herself, or that he was born to a station less dependent on continuous exertion; but on these points the dark sibyl preserved an obstinate silence. She was satisfied with the hints she had already thrown out, and absolutely refused to say more till better authorized by the inquiries she had set on foot. Artfully, she turned from these topics of closer and more household interest, to those on which she had previously insisted—connected with the general knowledge of mankind, and the complicated science of practical life. To fire his genius, wing his energies, inflame his ambition above that slow, laborious drudgery to which he had linked the chances of his career, and which her fiery and rapid intellect was wholly unable to comprehend—save as a waste of life for uncertain and distant objects—became her task. And she saw with delight that Ardworth listened to her more assentingly than he had done at first. In truth, the pain shut within his heart, the conflict waged keenly between his reason and his passion, unfitted him, for the time, for mere mechanical employment, in which his genius could afford him no consolation. Now, genius is given to man, not only to enlighten others, but to comfort as well as to elevate himself. Thus, in all the sorrows of actual existence, the man is doubly inclined to turn to his genius for distraction. Harassed in this world of action, he knocks at the gate of that world of idea or fancy which he is privileged to enter: he escapes from the clay to the spirit. And rarely, till some great grief comes, does the man in whom the celestial fire is lodged know all the gift of which he is possessed. At last, Ardworth's visits ceased abruptly. He shut himself up once more in his chambers; but the law books were laid aside.

Varney, who generally contrived to call

when Ardworth was not there, seldom interrupted the lovers in their little paradise of the garden; but he took occasion to ripen and cement his intimacy with Percival; sometimes walked, or, (if St. John and his cabriolet), drove home and dined with him, *tête-a-tête* in Curzon-street; and as he made Helen his chief subject of conversation, Percival could not but esteem him amongst the most agreeable of men. With Helen, when Percival was not there, Varney held some secret conferences —secret even from Percival; two, or three times, before the hour in which Percival was accustomed to come, they had been out together; and Helen's face looked more cheerful than usual on their return. It was not surprising that Gabriel Varney, so displeasing to a man like Ardworth, should have won little less favor with Helen than with Percival; for, to say nothing of an ease and suavity of manner which stole into the confidence of those in whom to confide was a natural propensity, his various acquisitions and talents, imposing, from the surface over which they spread, and the glitter which they made, had an inevitable effect upon a mind so susceptible as Helen's to admiration for art and respect for knowledge. But what chiefly conciliated her to Varney, whom she regarded, moreover, as her aunt's most intimate friend, was that she was persuaded he was unhappy, and wronged by the world for fortune. Varney had a habit of so representing himself—of dwelling with a bitter eloquence which his natural malignity made forcible—on the injustice of the world to superior intellect. He was a great accuser of Fate. It is the illogical weakness of some evil natures to lay all their crimes, and the consequences of crime, upon *Destiny*. There was a heat, a vigor, a rush of words, and a readiness of strong, if trite, imagery in what Varney said, that deceived the young into the monstrous error that he was an enthusiast—misanthropical, perhaps, but only so from enthusiasm. How could Helen, whose slightest thought, when a star broke forth from the cloud, or a bird sung suddenly from the copse, had more of wisdom and of poetry than all Varney's gaudy and painted seemings ever could even mimic—how *could* she be so deceived? Yet so it was. Here stood a man whose youth she supposed had been devoted to refined and elevating pursuits, gifted, neglected, disappointed, solitary, and unhappy. She saw little beyond. You had but to touch her pity to win her interest, and to excite her trust. Of anything farther, even had Percival never existed, she could not have dreamed. It was because a secret and undefinable repugnance, in the midst of pity, trust, and friendship, put Varney altogether out of the light of a possible lover, that all those sentiments were so easily kindled. This repugnance arose not from the disparity between their years; it was rather that nameless uncongeniality, which does not forbid friendship but is irreconcilable with love. To do Varney justice, he never offered to reconcile the two. Not for love did he secretly confer with Helen—not for love did his heart beat against the hand which reposed so carelessly on his murderous arm.

CHAPTER X.

The Battle of the Snake.

THE progress of affection between natures like those of Percival and Helen, favored by free and constant intercouse, was naturally rapid. It was scarcely five weeks from the day he had first seen Helen, and he already regarded her as his plighted bride. During the earlier days of his courtship, Percival, enamoured and absorbed for the first time in his life, did not hasten to make his mother the *confidante* of his happiness. He had written but twice; and though he said briefly, in the second letter, that he had discovered two relations, both interesting, and one charming, he had deferred naming them, or entering into detail. This, not alone from that indescribable coyness which all have experienced in addressing even those with whom they are most intimate, in the early, half unrevealed, and mystic emotions of first love; but because Lady Mary's letters had been so full of her sister's declining health, of her own anxieties and fears, that he had shrunk from giving her a new subject of anxiety: and a confidence, full of hope and joy, seemed to him unfeeling and unseasonable. He knew how necessarily uneasy and restless an avowal that his heart was seriously engaged to one she had never seen, would make that tender mother; and that his

confession would rather add to her cares, than produce sympathy with his transports.

But now, feeling impatient for his mother's assent to the formal proposals which had become due to Madame Dalibard and Helen, and taking advantage of the letter last received from her, which gave more cheering accounts of her sister, and expressed curiosity for further explanation as to his half disclosure, he wrote at length, and cleared his breast of all its secrets. It was the same day in which he wrote this confession, and pleaded his cause, that we accompany him to the house of his sweet mistress, and leave him by her side, in the accustomed garden. Within, Madame Dalibard, whose chair was set by the window, bent over certain letters, which she took, one by one, from her desk, and read slowly, lifting her eyes from time to time, and glancing towards the young people, as they walked, hand in hand, round the small demesnes, now hid by the fading foilage, now emerging into view. Those letters were the early love-epistles of William Mainwaring. She had not recurred to them for years. Perhaps she now felt that food necessary to the sustainment of her fiendish designs. It was a strange spectacle, to see this being, so full of vital energy, mobile and restless as a serpent; condemned to that helpless decrepitude, chained to the uneasy seat—not as in the resigned and passive imbecility of extreme age, but rather as one whom, in the prime of life, the rack has broken, leaving the limbs inert, the mind active, the form as one dead, the heart with superbundant vigor;—a cripple's impotence, and a Titan's will!

What, in that dreary imprisonment, and amidst the silence she habitually preserved, passed through the caverns of that breast, one can no more conjecture, than one can count the blasts that sweep and rage through the hollows of impenetrable rock, or the elements that conflict in the bosom of the volcano, everlastingly at work. She had read, and replaced the letters, and leaning her cheek on her hand, was gazing vacantly on the wall, when Varney intruded on that dismal solitude.

He closed the door after him, with more than usual care; and, drawing a seat close to Lucretia's, said, "*Belle mère*, the time has arrived for *you* to act—my part is well-nigh closed."

"Ay!" said Lucretia, wearily; "what is the news you bring?"

"First," replied Varney, and, as he spoke, he shut the window, as if his whisper could possibly be heard without—"first, all this business connected with Helen is at length arranged. You know when, agreeably to your permission, I first suggested to her, as it were casually, that you were so reduced in fortune, that I trembled to regard your future,—that you had years ago sacrificed nearly half your pecuniary resources to maintain her parents—she of herself reminded me that she was entitled, when of age, to a sum far exceeding all her wants, and——"

"That I might be a pensioner on the child of William Mainwaring and Susan Mivers," interrupted Lucretia. "I know that, and thank her not. Pass on."

"And you know, too, that in the course of my conversation with the girl, I let out also incidentally that, even so, you were dependent on the chances of her life; that if she died (and youth itself is mortal) before she was of age, the sum left her by her grandfather would revert to her father's family; and so, by hints, I drew her on to ask if there was no mode by which, in case of her death, she might ensure subsistence to you. So that you see the whole scheme was made at her own prompting. I did but, as a man of business, suggest the means—an insurance on her life."

"Varney, these details are hateful. I do not doubt that you have done all to forestall inquiry and elude risk. The girl has insured her life to the amount of her fortune?"

"To that amount only! Pooh! Her death will buy more than that! As no one single office will insure for more than 5000*l.*, and as it was easy to pursuade her that such offices were liable to failure, and that it was usual to insure in several, and for a larger amount than the sum desired, I got her to enter herself at three of the principal offices. The amount paid to us on her death will be fifteen thousand pounds. It will be paid, (and here I have followed the best legal advice), in trust to me for your benefit. Hence, therefore, even if our researches fail us, if no son of yours can be found, with sufficient evidence to prove, against the keen interests and bought advocates of heirs-at-law, the right to Laughton, this girl will repay us well, will replace what I

have taken, at the risk of my neck, perhaps—certainly at the risk of the hulks, from the capital of my uncle's legacy—will refund what we have spent on the inquiry—and the residue will secure to you an independence sufficing for your wants almost for life, and to me, what will purchase with economy" (and Varney smiled) "a year or so of a gentleman's idle pleasures. Are you satisfied thus far?"

"She will die happy and innocent!" muttered Lucretia, with the growl of demoniac disappointment.

"Will you wait, then, till my forgery is detected, and I have no power to buy the silence of the trustees—wait till I am in prison, and on a trial for life and death? Reflect, every day, every hour of delay, is fraught with peril. But if my safety is nothing compared to the refinement of your revenge, will you wait till Helen marries Percival St. John. You start! But can you suppose that this innocent love-play will not pass rapidly to its *dénouement?* It is but yesterday that Percival confided to me, that he should write this very day to his mother, and communicate all his feelings and his hopes;—that he waited but her assent, to propose formally for Helen. Now one of two things must happen. Either this mother, haughty and vain as lady mothers mostly are, may refuse consent to her son's marriage with the daughter of a disgraced banker, and the niece of that Lucretia Dalibard whom her husband would not admit beneath his roof——"

"Hold, sir!" exclaimed Lucretia, haughtily, and amidst all the passions that darkened her countenance and degraded her soul, some flash of her ancestral spirit shot across her brow; but it passed quickly, and she added, with fierce composure—"You are right; go on!"

"Either—and pardon me for an insult that comes not from me—either this will be the case; Lady Mary St. John will hasten back in alarm to London; she exercises extraordinary control over her son; she may withdraw him from us altogether, from me as well as you, and the occasion now presented to us may be lost (who knows?) for ever; or she may be a weak and fond woman,—may be detained in Italy by her sister's illness,—may be anxious that the last lineal descendant of the St. Johns should marry betimes; and, moved by her darling's prayers, may consent at once to the union. Or a third course, which Percival thinks the most probable, and which, though most unwelcome to us of all, I had well nigh forgotten, may be adopted. She may come to England, and, in order to judge her son's choice with her own eyes, may withdraw Helen from your roof to hers. At all events, delays are dangerous—dangerous, putting aside my personal interest, and regarding only your own object—may bring to our acts new and searching eyes—may cut us off from the habitual presence either of Percival, or Helen, or both; or surround them, at the first breath of illness, with prying friends, and formidable precautions. The birds now are in our hands. Why then open the cage and bid them fly, in order to spread the net? This morning all the final documents with the Insurance Companies are completed. It remains for me but to pay the first quarterly premiums. For that I think I am prepared without drawing farther on your hoards or my own scanty resources, which Grabman will take care to drain fast enough."

"And Percival St. John?" said Madame Dalibard. "We want no idle sacrifices. If my son be *not* found, we need not that boy's ghost amongst those who haunt us."

"Surely not," said Varney; "and for my part, he may be more useful to me alive than dead. There is no insurance on *his* life, and a rich friend (credulous green-horn that he is!) is scarcely of that flock of geese which it were wise to slay from the mere hope of a golden egg. Percival St. John is your victim, not mine—not till you give the order, would I lift a finger to harm him."

"Yes," let him live, unless my son be found to me," said Madame Dalibard almost exultingly: "let him live to forget yon fair-faced fool, leaning now, see you, so delightedly on his arm, and fancying eternity in the hollow vows of love!—let him live to wrong and abandon her by forgetfulness, though even in the grave; to laugh at his boyish dreams—to sully her memory in the arms of harlots! Oh, if the dead can suffer, let him live, that she may feel beyond the grave his inconstancy and his fall! Methinks that that thought will comfort me, if Vincent be no more, and I stand childless in the world!"

"It is so settled, then," said Varney, ever ready to clench the business that promised

gold, and relieve his apprehensions of the detection of his fraud. "And now to your noiseless hands, as soon as may be, I consign the girl: she has lived long enough!"

CHAPTER XI.

Love and Innocence.

WHILE this the conference between these execrable and ravening birds of night and prey, Helen and her boy-lover were thus conversing in the garden, while the autumn sun—for it was in the second week of October—broke pleasantly through the yellowing leaves of the tranquil shrubs, and the flowers, which should have died with the gone summer, still fresh by their tender care, despite the lateness of the season, smiled gratefully as their light footsteps passed.

"Yes, Helen," said Percival—"yes, you will love my mother, for she is one of those people who seem to attract love, as if it were a property belonging to them. Even my dog Beau (you know how fond Beau is of *me!*) always nestles at *her* feet, when we are at home. I own she has pride, but it is a pride that never offended any one. You know there are some flowers that we call *proud*. The pride of the flower is not more harmless than my mother's. But perhaps pride is not the right word—it is rather the aversion to anything low or mean, the admiration for everything pure and high. Ah, how that very pride, if pride it be, will make her love you, my Helen!"

"You need not tell me," said Helen, smiling seriously, "that I shall love your mother, I love her already—nay, from the first moment you said you *had* a mother, my heart leaped to her. Your mother! if ever you are really jealous, it must be of her! but that she should love me,—that it is what I doubt and fear. For if you were my brother, Percival, I should be so ambitious for you. A nymph must rise from the stream, a sylphid from the rose, before I could allow another to steal you from my side. And if I think I should feel this only as your sister, what can be precious enough to satisfy a mother?"

"You, and you only," answered Percival, with his blithesome laugh—"you, my sweet Helen, much better than nymph or sylphid, about whom, between ourselves, I never cared three straws, even in a poem. How pleased you will be with Laughton! Do you know, I was lying awake all last night, to consider what room you would like best for your own. And at last, I have decided—come, listen—it opens from the music-gallery that overhangs the hall. From the window, you overlook the southern side of the park, and catch a view of the lake beyond. There are two niches in the wall—one for your piano, one for your favorite books. It is just large enough to hold four persons with ease—*our* mother and myself, your aunt, whom by that time we shall have petted into good humor, and if we can coax Ardworth there—the best good fellow that ever lived—I think our party will be complete. By the way, I am uneasy about Ardworth, it is so long since we have seen him; I have called three times—nay, five—but his odd-looking clerk always swears he is not at home. Tell me, Helen, now, you who know him so well—tell me, how I can serve him? You know, I am so terribly rich, (at least, I shall be in a month or two;)—I can never get through my money, unless my friends will help me. And is it not shocking that that noble fellow should be so poor, and yet suffer me to call him 'friend,' as if in friendship one man should want everything, and the other nothing. Still, I don't know how to venture to propose—come, you understand me, Helen—let us lay our wise heads together, and make him well off, in spite of himself."

It was in the loose, boyish talk of Percival's, that he had found the way not only to Helen's heart, but to her soul. For in this, she (grand undeveloped poetess) recognized a nobler poetry than we chain to rhythm—the poetry of generous deeds. She yearned to kiss the warm hand she held, and drew nearer to his side as she answered—"And sometimes, dear, dear Percival, you wonder why I would rather listen to you than to all Mr. Varney's bitter eloquence, or even to my dear cousin's aspiring ambition. They talk well, but it is of themselves; while you——"

Percival blushed, and checked her.

"Well," she said—"well, to your question. Alas! you know little of my cousin, if you think all our arts could decoy him out of his rugged independence, and, much as I love him, I could not wish it. But do not fear for

him; he is one of those who are born to succeed, and without help."

"How do you know that, pretty prophetess?" said Percival, with the superior air of manhood. "I have seen more of the world than you have, and I cannot see why Ardworth should *succeed* as you call it;—or, if so, why he should succeed less if he swung his hammock in a better birth than that hole in Gray's Inn, and would just let me keep him a cab and a groom."

Had Percival talked of keeping John Ardworth an elephant and a palanquin, Helen could not have been more amused. She clapped her little hands in a delight that provoked Percival, and laughed out loud. Then seeing her boy-lover's lip pouted petulantly, and his brow was overcast, she said more seriously—

"Do you not know what it is to feel convinced of something which you cannot explain? Well, I feel this as to my cousin's fame and fortunes. Surely, too, you must feel it, you scarce know why, when he speaks of that future, which seems so dim and so far to *me*, as of something that belonged to him."

"Very true, Helen," said Percival, "he lays it out like the map of his estate. One can't laugh when he says so carelessly—'At such an age I shall lead my circuit—at such an age I shall be rich—at such an age I shall enter parliament—and beyond that I shall look as yet no farther.' And, poor fellow, then he will be forty-three! And in the meanwhile to suffer such privations!"

"There are no privations to one who lives in the future," said Helen with that noble intuition into lofty natures, which at times flashed from her childish simplicity, foreshadowing what, if Heaven spare her life, her maturer intellect may develop: "For Ardworth there is no such thing as poverty. He is as rich in his hopes as we are in——" She stopped short, blushed and continued with downcast looks—"As well might you pity me in these walks, so dreary without you. I do not live in them—I live in my thoughts of you."

Her voice trembled with emotion in those last words. She slid from Percival's arm, and timidly sat down (and he beside her) on a little mound under the single chestnut tree, that threw its shade over the garden.

Both were silent for some moments—Percival with grateful ecstacy—Helen with one of those sudden fits of mysterious melancholy, to which her nature was so subjected.

He was the first to speak. "Helen," he said gravely, "since I have known you, I feel as if life were a more solemn thing than I ever regarded it before. It seems to me as if a new and more arduous duty was added to those for which I was prepared—a duty, Helen, to become worthy of you!—Will you smile? No—you will not smile, if I say I have had my brief moments of ambition. Sometimes as a boy, with Plutarch in my hand, stretched idly under the old cedar trees at Laughton—sometimes as a sailor, when, becalmed on the Atlantic, and my ears freshly filled with tales of Collingwood and Nelson, I stole from my comrades, and leant, musingly over the boundless sea. But when this ample heritage passed to me—when I had no more my own fortunes to make, my own rank to build up,—such dreams became less and less frequent. Is it not true that wealth makes us contented to be obscure? Yes; I understand, while I speak, why poverty itself befriends, not cripples, Ardworth's energies. But since I have known you, dearest Helen, those dreams return more vividly than ever. He who claims you, should be—must be—something nobler than the crowd! Helen!"—and he rose by an irresistible and restless impulse—"I shall not be contented till you are as proud of your choice as I of mine!"

It seemed, as Percival spoke and looked, as if boyhood were cast from him for ever. The unusual weight and gravity of his words, to which his tone gave even eloquence—the steady flash of his dark eyes—his erect, elastic form—all had the dignity of man. Helen gazed on him silently, and with a heart so full, that words would not come, and tears overflowed instead.

That sight sobered him at once—he knelt down beside her, threw his arms around her—it was his first embrace—and kissed the tears away.

"How have I distressed you?—why do you weep?"

"Let me weep on, Percival, dear Percival! These tears are like prayers—they speak to Heaven—and of you!"

A step came noiselessly over the grass, and

between the lovers and the sunlight, stood Gabriel Varney.

CHAPTER XII.

Sudden Celebrity and Patient Hope.

PERCIVAL was unusually gloomy and abstracted in his way to town that day, though Varney was his companion, and in the full play of those animal spirits which he owed to his unrivalled physical organization and the obtuseness of his conscience. Seeing, at length, that his gaiety did not communicate itself to Percival, he paused and looked at him suspiciously. A falling leaf startles the steed, and a shadow the guilty man.

"You are sad, Percival?" he said, inquiringly. "What has disturbed you?"

"It is nothing—or, at least, would seem nothing to you," answered Percival, with an effort to smile, "for I have heard you laugh at the doctrine of presentiments. We sailors are more superstitious."

"What presentiment can you possibly entertain?" asked Varney, more anxiously than Percival could have anticipated.

"Presentiments are not so easily defined, Varney. But, in truth, poor Helen has infected me. Have you not remarked, that, gay as she habitually is, some shadow comes over her so suddenly, that one cannot trace the cause?"

"My dear Percival," said Varney, after a short pause, "what you say does not surprise me. It would be false kindness to conceal from you that I have heard Madame Dalibard say that her mother was, when about her age, threatened with consumptive symptoms,—but she lived many years afterwards. Nay, nay, rally yourself; Helen's appearance, despite the extreme purity of her complexion, is not that of one threatened by the terrible malady of our climate. The young are often haunted with the idea of early death. As we grow older, that thought is less cherished; in youth it is a sort of luxury. To this mournful idea, (which you see, you have remarked as well as I), we must attribute not only Helen's occasional melancholy, but a generosity of forethought, which I cannot deny myself the pleasure of communicating to you, though her delicacy would be shocked at my indiscretion. You know how helpless her aunt is. Well, Helen, who is entitled, when of age, to a moderate competence, has persuaded me to insure her life, and accept a trust to hold the monies (if ever unhappily due) for the benefit of my mother-in-law, so that Madame Dalibard may not be left destitute, if her niece die before she is twenty-one. How like Helen!—is it not?"

Percival was too overcome to answer.

Varney resumed—"I entreat you not to mention this to Helen—it would offend her modesty to have the secret of her good deeds thus betrayed by one to whom alone she confided them. I could not resist her entreaties; though, *entre-nous*, it cripples me not a little to advance for her the necessary sums for the premiums. Apropos, this bring me to a point on which I feel, as the vulgar idiom goes, 'very awkward,'—as I always do in those confounded money matters. But you were good enough to ask me to paint you a couple of pictures for Laughton. Now, if you could let me have some portion of the sum, whatever it be (for I don't price my paintings to you), it would very much oblige me."

Percival turned away his face as he wrung Varney's hand, and muttered, with a choked voice, "Let me have my share in Helen's divine forethought. Good heavens! she, so young, to look thus beyond the grave, always for others—for others!"

Callous as the wretch was, Percival's emotion and his proposal struck Varney with a sentiment like compunction. He had designed to appropriate the lover's gold, as it was now offered; but that Percival himself should propose it, blind to the grave, to which that gold paved the way, was a horror not counted in those to which his fell cupidity and his goading apprehensions had familiarized his conscience.

"No," he said, with one of those wayward scruples to which the blackest criminals are sometimes susceptible—"no. I have promised Helen to regard this as a loan to her, which she is to repay me when of age. What you may advance me is for the picture. I have a right to do as I please with what is bought by my own labor. And the subjects of the pictures—what shall they be?"

"For one picture try and recall Helen's

aspect and attitude when you came to us in the garden, and entitle your subject—'The Foreboding.'"

"Hem!" said Varney, hesitatingly. "And the other subject!"

"Wait for that, till the joy-bells at Laughton have welcomed a bride, and then—and then, Varney," added Percival, with something of his natural joyous smile, "you must take the expression as you find it. Once under my care, and, please Heaven, the one picture shall laughingly upbraid the other!"

As this was said, the cabriolet stopped at Percival's door. Varney dined with him that day; and if the conversation flagged, it did not revert to the subject which had so darkened the bright spirits of the host, and so tried the hypocrisy of the guest. When Varney left, which he did as soon as the dinner was concluded, Percival silently put a check into his hands, to a greater amount that Varney had anticipated even from his generosity.

"This is for four pictures, not two," he said, shaking his head; and then, with his characteristic conceit, he added—"Well, some years hence, the world shall not call them overpaid. Adieu, my Medici; a dozen such men, and Art would revive in England."

When he was left alone, Percival sate down, and, leaning his face on both hands, gave way to the gloom which his native manliness, and the delicacy that belongs to true affection, had made him struggle not to indulge in the presence of another. Never had he so loved Helen as in that hour; never had he so intimately and intensely felt her matchless worth. The image of her unselfish, quiet, melancholy consideration for that austere, uncaressing, unsympathizing relation, under whose shade her young heart must have withered, seemed to him filled with a celestial pathos. And he almost hated Varney that the cynic painter could have talked of it with that business-like phlegm. The evening deepened; the tranquil street grew still; the air seemed close; the solitude oppressed him; he rose abruptly, seized his hat, and went forth slowly, and still with a heavy heart.

As he entered Piccadilly, on the broad step of that house successively inhabited by the Duke of Queensbury and Lord Hertford, —on the step of that mansion, up which so many footsteps light with wanton pleasure have gaily trod, Percival's eye fell upon a wretched, squalid, ragged object, doubled up, as it were, in that last despondency which has ceased to beg, that has no care to steal, that has no wish to live. Percival, halted and touched the outcast.

"What is the matter, my poor fellow? Take care—the policeman will not suffer you to rest here. Come, cheer up, I say! There is something to find you a better lodging!"

The silver fell unheeded on the stones. The thing of rags did not even raise its head, but a low broken voice, muttered—

"It be too late now—let 'em take me to prison—let 'em send me 'cross the sea to Buttany—let 'em hang me, if they please. I be's good for nothin' now—nothin'!"

Altered as the voice was, it struck Percival as familiar. He looked down and caught a view of the drooping face.

"Up, man, up!" he said, cheerily; "see, Providence sends you an old friend in need, to teach you never to despair again."

The hearty accent, more than the words, touched and aroused the poor creature. He rose mechanically, and a sickly grateful smile passed over his wasted features, as he recognized St. John.

"Come! how is this? I have always understood that to keep a crossing was a flourishing trade now-a-days."

"I 'as no crossin'. I 'as sold her!" groaned Beck, "I be's good for nothin' now, but to cadge about the streets, and steal, and filch, and hang like the rest on us! Thank you, kindly, sir," (and Beck pulled his forelock), "but, please your 'onor, I vould rather make an ind on it!"

"Pooh, pooh! didn't I tell you when you wanted a friend to come to me? Why did you doubt me, foolish fellow? Pick up those shillings—get a bed and a supper. Come and see me to-morrow at nine o'clock, you know where—the same house in Curzon street; you shall tell me then your whole story, and it shall go hard but I'll buy you another crossing, or get you something just as good."

Poor Beck swayed a moment or two on his slender legs, like a drunken man, and then suddenly falling on his knees, he kissed the hem of his benefactor's garment, aud fairly wept. Those tears relieved him—they seemed to was the drought of despair from his heart.

"Hush, hush! or we shall have a crowd round us. You'll not forget, my poor friend, No. ——, Curzon-street — nine to-morrow. Make haste, now, and get food and rest—you look, indeed, as if you wanted them. Ah! would to Heaven all the poverty in this huge city stood here in thy person, and we could aid it as easily as I can thee!"

Percival had moved on as he said those last words, and, looking back, he had the satisfaction to see that Beck was slowly crawling after him, and had escaped the grim question of a very portly policeman, who had no doubt expressed a natural indignation at the audacity of so ragged a skeleton not keeping itself respectably at home in its churchyard.

Entering one of the clubs in St. James's street, Percival found a small knot of politicians in eager conversation respecting a new book which had been published but a day or two before, but which had already seized the public attention with that strong grasp which constitutes always an era in an author's life, sometimes an epoch in a nation's literature. The newspapers were full of extracts from the work—the gossips of conjecture as to the authorship. We need scarcely say that a book which makes this kind of sensation, must hit some popular feeling of the hour, supply some popular want. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, therefore, its character is political: it was so in the present instance. It may be remembered that that year Parliament sate during great part of the month of October, that it was the year in which the Reform Bill was rejected by the House of Lords, and that public feeling in our time had never been so keenly excited.

This work appeared during the short interval between the rejection of the Bill and the prorogation of Parliament.* And what made it more remarkable, was that while stamped with the passion of the time, there was a weight of calm and stern reasoning, embodied in its vigorous periods, which gave to the arguments of the advocate something of the impartiality of the judge. Unusually abstracted and unsocial, for, despite his youth and that peculiar bashfulness before noticed, he was generally alive enough to all that passed around him, Percival paid little attention to the comments that circulated round the easy chairs in his vicinity, till a subordinate in the administration, with whom he was slightly acquainted, pushed a small volume towards him, and said:

"You have seen this, of course, St. John? Ten to one you do not guess the author. It is certainly not B——m, though the Lord Chancellor has energy enough for anything. R—— says it has a touch of S——r."

"Could M——y have written it?" asked a young member of Parliament, timidly.

"M——y!—very like his matchless style, to be sure! You can have read very little of M——y, I should think," said the subordinate with the true sneer of an official and a critic.

The young member could have slunk into a nutshell.

Percival with very languid interest, glanced over the volume. But despite his mood, and his moderate affection for political writings, the passage he opened upon struck and seized him unawares. Though the sneer of the official was just, and the style was not comparable to M——y's, (whose is?) still the steady rush of strong words, strong with strong thoughts—heaped massively together—showed the ease of genius and the gravity of thought: —the absence of all effeminate glitter—the iron grapple with the pith and substance of the argument opposed, seemed familiar to Percival. He thought he heard the deep bass of John Ardworth's earnest voice, when some truth roused his advocacy, or some falsehood provoked his wrath. He put down the book, bewildered. Could it be the obscure briefless lawyer in Gray's inn, (that very morning the object of his young pity,) who was thus lifted into fame? He smiled at his own credulity. But he listened with more attention to the enthusiastic praises that circled round, and the various guesses which accompanied them. Soon, however, his former gloom returned—the Babel began to chafe and weary him. He rose and went forth again into the air. He strolled on without purpose, but mechanically, into the street where he had first seen Helen. He paused a few moments under the colonnade which faced Beck's old deserted crossing. His pause attracted the notice of one of the unhappy beings whom we suffer to pollute our streets and rot in our hospitals. She approached and spoke to him —to *him* whose heart was so full of Helen!

* Parliament was prorogued October 20th; the bill rejected by the Lords, October 8th.

He shuddered, and strode on. At length, he paused before the twin towers of Westminster Abbey, on which the moon rested in solemn splendor; and in that space, one man only shared his solitude. A figure with folded arms leant against the iron rails, near the statue of Canning, and his gaze comprehended in one view, the walls of the Parliament, in which all passions wage their war, and the glorious abbey, which gives a Walhalla to the great. The utter stillness of the figure so in unison with the stillness of the scene, had upon Percival more effect than would have been produced by the most clamorous crowd. He looked round curiously, as he passed, and uttered an exclamation, as he recognized John Ardworth.

"You, Percival!" said Ardworth—"a strange meeting place at this hour! What can bring you hither?"

"Only whim, I fear—and you?" as Percival linked his arm into Ardworth's.

"Twenty years hence I will tell you what brought me hither!" answered Ardworth, moving slowly back towards Whitehall.

"If we are alive then!"

"We live till our destinies below are fulfilled; till our uses have passed from us in this sphere, and rise to benefit another. For the soul is as a sun, but with this noble distinction, the sun is confined in its career—day after day, it visits the same lands, gilds the same planets, or rather, as the astronomers hold, stands the motionless centre of moving worlds. But the soul, when it sinks into seeming darkness and the deep, rises to new destinies, fresh regions unvisited before. What we call Eternity, may be but an endless series of those transitions, which men call *deaths*, abandonments of home after home, ever to fairer scenes and loftier heights. Age after age, the spirit, that glorious Nomand, may shift its tent, faded not to rest in the dull Elysium of the Heathen, but carrying with it evermore its elements,—Activity and Desire. Why should the soul ever repose? God, its principle, reposes never. While we speak, new worlds are sparkling forth—suns are throwing off their nebulæ—nebulæ are hardening into worlds. The Almighty proves his existence by creating. Think you that Plato is at rest, and Shakspeare only basking on a sun-cloud? Labor is the very essence of spirit as of divinity: labor is the purgatory of the erring; it may become the hell of the wicked, but labor is not less the heaven of the good!"

Ardworth spoke with unusual earnestness and passion; and his idea of the future was emblematic of his own active nature: for each of us is wisely left to shape out, amidst the impenetrable mists, his own ideal of the Hereafter. The warrior child of the biting north placed his Hela amid snows, and his Himmel in the banquets of victorious war; the son of the east, parched by relentless summer—his hell amidst fire, and his elysium by cooling streams; the weary peasant sighs through life for rest, and rest awaits his vision beyond the grave; the workman of genius—ever ardent, ever young—honors toil as the glorious development of being—and springs refreshed over the abyss of the grave—to follow, from star to star, the progress that seems to him at once the supreme felicity and the necessary law. So be it with the fantasy of each! Wisdom that is infallible, and love that never sleeps, watch over the darkness—and bid darkness be, that we may dream!

"Alas!" said the young listener—"what reproof do you not convey to those, like me, who, devoid of the power which gives results to every toil, have little left to them in life, but to idle life away. All have not the gift to write, or harangue, or speculate, or——"

"Friend," interrupted Ardworth, bluntly; "do not belie yourself. There lives not a man on earth—out of a lunatic asylum—who has not in him the power to do good. What can writers, haranguers, or speculators do more than that? Have you ever entered a cottage—ever travelled in a coach—ever talked with a peasant in the field, or loitered with a mechanic at the loom, and not found that each of those men had a talent you had not, knew some things you knew not? The most useless creature that ever yawned at a club, or counted the vermin on his rags under the suns of Calabria, has no excuse for want of intellect. What men want is, not talent, it is purpose;—in other words, not the power to achieve, but the will to labor. You, Percival Saint John—*you* affect to despond, lest you should not have your uses—you with that fresh warm heart—you with that pure enthusiasm for what is fresh and good—you, who can even admire a thing like Varney, because, through the

tawdryman, you recognize art and skill, even though wasted in spoiling canvass—you, who have only to live as you feel, in order to diffuse blessings all around you,—fie, foolish boy!—you will own your error when I tell you why I come from my rooms at Gray's Inn to see the walls in which Hampden, a plain country squire like you, shook with plain words the tyranny of eight hundred years."

"Ardworth, I will not wait your time to tell me what took you yonder. I have penetrated a secret that you, not kindly, kept from me. This morning you rose and found yourself famous; this evening you have come to gaze upon the scene of the career to which that fame will more rapidly conduct you——"

"And upon the tomb which the proudest ambition I can form on earth must content itself to win! A poor conclusion, if all ended here!"

"I am right, however," said Percival, with boyish pleasure. "It is you whose praises have just filled my ears. You, dear—dear Ardworth! How rejoiced I am!"

Ardworth pressed heartily the hand extended to him: "I should have trusted you with my secret to-morrow, Percival; as it is, keep it for the present. A craving of my nature has been satisfied, a grief has found distraction; as for the rest, any child who throws a stone into the water with all his force can make a splash; but he would be a fool, indeed, if he supposed that the splash was a sign that he had turned a stream."

Here Ardworth ceased abruptly—and Percival, engrossed by a bright idea, which had suddenly occurred to him, exclaimed—

"Ardworth—your desire, your ambition, is to enter parliament; there must be a dissolution shortly—the success of your book will render you acceptable to many a popular constituency. All you can want is a sum for the necessary expenses. Borrow that sum from me—repay me when you are in the cabinet, or attorney-general. It shall be so!"

A look so bright, that even by that dull lamplight, the glow of the cheek, the brilliancy of the eye were visible—flashed over Ardworth's face. He felt at that moment what ambitious man must feel when the object he has seen dimly and afar—is placed within his grasp; but his reason was proof even against that strong temptation.

He passed his arm round the boy's slender waist, and drew him to his heart, with grateful affection, as he replied.

"And what, if now in parliament, giving up my career—with no regular means of subsistence—what could I be, but a venal adventurer? Place would become so vitally necessary to me, that I should feed but a dangerous war between my conscience and my wants. In chasing *Fame*, the shadow, I should lose the substance, *Independence*,—why, that very thought would paralyze my tongue. No, no—my generous friend. As labor is the arch elevator of man, so patience in the essence of labor. First let me build the foundation, I may then calculate the height of my tower. First let me be independent of the great—I will then be the champion of the lowly. Hold!—tempt me no more—do not lure me to the loss of self-esteem! And now Percival," resumed Ardworth, in the tone of one who wishes to plunge into some utterly new current of thought—"let us forget for awhile these solemn aspirations, and be frolicsome and human. '*Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit.*' '*Neque semper arcum tendit Apollo.*' What say you to a cigar?"

Percival stared. He was not yet familiarized to the eccentric whims of his friend!

"Hot negus and a cigar!" repeated Ardworth, while a smile, full of drollery, played round the corners of his lips, and twinkled in his deep-set eyes.

"Are you serious?'

"Not serious—I have been serious enough," (and Ardworth sighed), for the last three weeks. Who goes 'to Corinth to be sage, or to the Cider Cellar to be serious?"

"I subscribe, then, to the negus and cigar," said Percival, smiling; and he had no cause to repent his compliance, as he accompanied Ardworth to one of the resorts favored by that strange person in his rare hours of relaxation.

For, seated at his favorite table, which happened, luckily, to be vacant, with his head thrown carelessly back, and his negus steaming before him, John Ardworth continued to pour forth, till the clock struck three, jest upon jest—pun upon pun—broad drollery upon broad drollery, without flagging, without intermission—so varied, so copious, so ready, so irresistible, that Percival was transported out

of all his melancholy, in enjoying, for the first time in his life, the exuberant gaiety of a grave mind once set free—all its intellect sparkling into wit—all its passion rushing into humor. And this was the man he had pitied!—supposed to have no sunny side to his life! How much greater had been his compassion and his wonder, if he could have known all that had passed, within the last few weeks, through that gloomy, yet silent breast, which, by the very breadth of its mirth, showed what must be the depth of its sadness!

CHAPTER XIII.

The Loss of the Crossing.

DESPITE the lateness of the hour before he got to rest, Percival had already breakfasted, when his valet informed him, with raised supercilious eyebrows, that "an uncommon ragged sort of a person insisted that he had been told to call." Though Beck had been at the house before, and the valet had admitted him—so much thinner, so much more ragged was he now, that the trim servant—no close observer of such folks—did not recognize him. However, at Percival's order, too well bred to show surprise, he ushered Beck up with much civility; and St. John was painfully struck with the ravages a few weeks had made upon the sweeper's countenance. The lines were so deeply ploughed—the dry hair looked so thin, and was so sown with gray, that Beck might have beat all Farren's skill in the part of an old man.

The poor Sweeper's tale, extricated from its peculiar phraseology, was simple enough, and soon told:—He had returned home at night to find his hoards stolen, and the labor of his life overthrown. How he passed that night he did not very well remember. We may well suppose that the little reason he possessed was well nigh bereft from him. No suspicion of the exact thief crossed his perturbed mind. Bad as Grabman's character might be, he held a respectable position compared with the other lodgers in the house. Bill, the cracksman, naturally, and by vocation, suggested the hand that had despoiled him;—how hope for redress, or extort surrender, from such a quarter? Mechanically, however, when the hour arrived to return to his day's task, he stole down the stairs, and lo, at the very door of the house, Bill's children were at play, and in the hand of the eldest he recognized what he called his "curril."

"Your curril?" interrupted St. John.

"Yes, curril—vot the little uns bite, afore they gets their teethin'."

St. John smiled, and supposing that Beck had some time or other been puerile enough to purchase such a bauble, nodded to him to continue;—To seize upon the urchin, and, in spite of kicks, bites, shrieks, or scratches, repossess himself of his treasure, was the feat of a moment. The brat's clamor drew out the father—and to him Beck, pocketing the coral, that its golden bells might not attract the more experienced eye, and influence the more formidable greediness of the paternal thief), loudly, and at first fearlessly, appealed. Him he charged. and accused, and threatened with all vengeance, human and Divine. Then changing his tone, he implored—he wept—he knelt. As soon as the startled cracksman recovered his astonishment at such audacity, and comprehended the nature of the charge against himself and his family, he felt the more indignant from a strange and unfamiliar consciousness of innocence. Seizing Beck by the nape of the neck, with a dexterous application of hand and foot, he sent him spinning into the kennel.

"Go to Jericho, mud-scraper!" cried Bill, in a voice of thunder—"and if ever thou sayst such a vopper agin—'sparaging the characters of them ere motherless babes—I'll seal thee up in a 'tato sack, and sell thee for fiv'pence to No. 7, the great body-snatcher. Take care how I ever sets eyes agin on thy h-ugly mug!"

With that Bill clapped to the door, and Beck, frightened out of her wits, crawled from the kennel, and, bruised and smarting, crept to his crossing. But he was unable to discharge his duties that day; his ill-fed, miserable frame was too weak for the stroke he had received. Long before dusk, he sneaked away, and, dreading to return to his lodging; lest, since nothing now was left worth robbing but his carcass, Bill might keep his word, and sell *that* to the body-snatcher, he took refuge under the only roof where he felt he could sleep in safety.

And here we must pause to explain. In our

first introduction of Buck, we contented ourselves with implying to the ingenious and practised reader, that his heart might still be large enough to hold something besides his crossing. Now, in one of the small alleys that have their vent in the great stream of Fleet-street, there dwelt an old widow-woman, who eked out her existence by charing—an industrious, drudging-creature, whose sole occupation since her husband, the journeyman bricklayer, fell from a scaffold, and, breaking his neck, left her happily childless, as well as penniless—had been scrubbing stone-floors, and cleaning out dingy houses when about to be let,—charing, in a word. And in this vocation had she kept body and soul together, till a bad rheumatism and old age had put an end to her utilities, and entitled her to the receipt of two shillings weekly from parochial munificence. Between this old woman and Beck there was a mysterious tie—so mysterious that he did not well comprehend it himself. Sometimes he called her "mammy"—sometimes "the h-old crittur." But certain it is, that to her he was indebted for that name which he bore, to the puzzlement of St. Giles's.

Becky Carruthers was the same the old woman; but Becky was one of those good creatures who are always called by their Christian names, and never rise into the importance of the surname, and the dignity of "Mistress:"—lopping off the last syllable of the familiar appellation, the outcast christened himself "Beck."

"And," said St. John, who in the course of question and answer had got thus far into the marrow of the Sweeper's narrative, "is not this good woman really your mother?"

"Mother!" echoed Beck, with disdain; "no, I 'as a gritter mother nor she. Sint Poll's is my mother. But the h-old crittur tuk care on me."

"I really don't understand you, Saint Paul's is your mother?—How?"

Beck shook his head mysteriously, and without answering the question, resumed the tale, which we must thus paraphrastically continue to deliver.

When he was a little more than six years old, Beck began to earn his own livelihood, by running errands, holding horses, scraping together pence and half-pence. Betimes, his passion for saving began; at first with a good and unselfish motive, that of surprising "mammy," at the week's end. But when "mammy," who then gained enough for herself patted his head and called him good boy, and bade him save for his own uses, and told him what a great thing it would be if he could lay by a pretty penny against he was a man, he turned miser on his own account; and the miserable luxury grew upon him. At last, by the permission of the police inspector, strengthened by that of the owner of the contiguous house, he made his great step in life, and succeeded a deceased negro in the dignity and emoluments of the memorable crossing. From that hour he felt himself fulfilling his proper destiny; but poor Becky, alas, had already fallen into the sere and yellow leaf! with her decline, her good qualities were impaired. She took to drinking—not to positive intoxication, but to making herself "comfortable;"—and, to satisfy her craving, Beck, waking betimes one morning, saw her emptying his pockets. Then he resolved, quietly and without upraiding her, to remove to a safer lodging. To save had become the imperative necessity of his existence. But to do him justice, Beck had a glimmering sense of what was due to the "h-old crittur." Every Saturday evening, he called at her house, and deposited with her a certain sum, not large even in proportion to his earnings, but which seemed to the poor ignorant miser, who grudged every farthing to himself, an enormous deduction from his total, and a sum sufficient for every possible want of humankind even to satiety. And now, in returning despoiled of all, save the few pence he had collected that day, it is but fait to him to add that not his least bitter pang was in the remembrance that this was the only Saturday on which, for the first time, the weekly stipend would fail.

But so ill and so wretched did he look when he reached her little room, that "mammy" forgot all thought of herself; and when he had told his tale, so kind was her comforting, so unselfish her sympathy, that his heart smote him for his own parsimony, for his hard resentment at her single act of peculation;—had not she the right to all he made? But remorse and grief alike soon vanished in the fever that now seized him; for several days he was insensible; and when he recovered sufficiently to be aware of what was around him, he saw

the widow seated beside him, within four bare walls,—everything, except the bed he slept on had been sold to support him in his illness. As soon as he could totter forth, Beck hastened to his crossing—alas, it was preoccupied! His absence had led to ambitious usurpation. A one-legged, sturdy sailor had mounted his throne, and wielded his sceptre. The decorum of the street forbade altercation to the contending parties; but the sailor referred discussion to a meeting at a flash house in the Rookery that evening. There, a jury was appointed, and the case opened. By the conventional laws that regulate this useful community, Beck was still in his rights; his reappearance sufficed to restore his claims, and an appeal to the policeman would no doubt re-establish his authority. But Beck was still so ill and so feeble, that he had a melancholy persuasion that he could not suitably perform the duties of his office; and when the sailor, not a bad fellow on the whole, offered to pay down on the nail what really seemed a very liberal sum for Beck's peaceful surrender of his rights, the poor wretch thought of the bare walls at his "mammy's," of the long, dreary interval that must elapse, even if able to work, before the furniture pawned could be redeemed by the daily profits of his post, and with a groan, he held out his hand, and concluded the bargain.

Creeping home to the "h-old crittur," he threw the purchase-money into her lap; then, broken-hearted, and in despair, he slunk forth again, in a sort of vague, dreamy hope, that the law which abhors vagabonds, would seize and finish him.

When this tale was done, Percival did not neglect the gentle task of admonition, which the poor Sweeper's softened heart and dull remorse made the easier. He pointed out, in soft tones, how the avarice he had indulged had been, perhaps, mercifull chastised; and drew no ineloquent picture of the vicious miseries of the confirmed miser. Beck listened humbly and respectfully, though so little did he understand of mercy, and Providence, and vice, that the diviner part of the homily was quite lost on him. However, he confessed penitently that "the mattress had made him vorse nor a beast to the h-old crittur;" and that "he was cured of saving to the end of his days.

"And now," said Percival, "as you really seem not strong enough to bear this out-of-door work, (the winter coming on, too), what say you to entering into my service? I want some help in my stables. The work is easy enough; and you are used to horses, you know, in a sort of a way."

Beck hesitated, and looked a moment undecided. At last, he said, "Please your 'onor, if I beant strong enough for the crossin', I'se afeared I'm too h-ailing to sarve you. And vouldn't I be vorse nor a wiper, to take your vages, and not vork for 'em h-as I h-ought?"

"Pooh, we'll soon make you strong, my man. Take my advice—don't let your head run on the crossing. That kind of industry exposes you to bad company and bad thoughts."

"That's vot it is, sir," said Beck, assentingly, laying his dexter forefinger on his sinister palm.

"Well! you are in my service, then. Go down stairs now, and get your breakfast;—by and by, you shall show me your, 'mammy's' house, and we'll see what can be done for her."

Beck pressed his hands to his eyes, trying hard not to cry; but it was too much for him; and as the valet, who appeared to Percival's summons, led him down the stairs, his sobs were heard from attic to basement.

CHAPTER XIV.

News from Grabman.

THAT day, opening thus auspiciously to Beck, was memorable to other and more prominent persons in this history.

Early in the forenoon a parcel was brought into Madame Dalibard which contained Ardworth's already famous book, a goodly assortment of extracts from the newspapers thereon, and the following letter from the young author:

"You will see, by the accompanying packet, that your counsels have had weight with me. I have turned aside in my slow legitimate career. I have, as you desired, made 'men talk of me.' What solid benefit I may reap from this, I know not. I shall not openly avow the book. Such notoriety cannot help me at the bar. But *liberavi animam meam*—excuse my pedantry

—I have let my soul free for a moment—I am now catching it back, to put bit and saddle on again. I will not tell you how you have disturbed me—how you have 'stung me into this premature rush amidst the crowd—how, after robbing me of name and father, you have driven me to this experiment with my own mind, to see if I was deceived, when I groaned to myself, 'The Public shall give you a name, and Fame shall be your mother.' I am satisfied with the experiment. I know better now what is in me: and I have regained my peace of mind. If, in the success of this hasty work, there be that which will gratify the interest you so kindly take in me, deem that success your own: I owe it to you—to your revelations—to your admonitions. I wait patiently your own time for further disclosures; till then, the wheel must work on, and the grist be ground. Kind and generous friend, till now I would not wound you by returning the sum you sent me—nay, more, I knew I should please you by devoting part of it to the risk of giving this essay to the world, and so making its good fortune doubly your own work. Now, when the publisher smiles, and the shopmen bow, and I am acknowledged to have a bank in my brains,—*now*, you cannot be offended to receive it back. Adieu. When my mind is in train again, and I feel my step firm on the old dull road, I will come to see you. Till then, yours—by what name? Open the 'Biographical Dictionary,' at hazard, and send me one."

"Gray's Inn."

Not at the noble thoughts, and the deep sympathy with mankind, that glowed through that work, over which Lucretia now tremulously hurried, did she feel delight. All that she recognized or desired to recognize, were those evidences of that kind of intellect which wins its way through the world, and which, strong and unmistakeable, rose up in every page of that vigorous logic and commanding style. The book was soon dropped thus read: the newspaper extracts pleased even more.

"This," she said, audibly, in the freedom of her solitude—"this is the son I asked for—a son in whom I can rise—in whom I can exchange the sense of crushing infamy for the old delicious ecstacy of pride: For this son can I do too much! No; in what I may do for him, methinks there will be no romorse! And he calls his success mine—mine!" Her nostrils dilated, and her front rose erect.

In the midst of this exultation, Varney found her, and before he could communicate the business which had brought him, he had to listen, which he did with the secret gnawing envy that every other man's success occasioned him, to her haughty self-felicitations.

He could not resist saying, with a sneer when she paused, as if to ask his sympathy:

"All this is very fine, *belle mère;* and yet I should hardly have thought that coarse-featured, uncouth limb of the law, who seldom moves without upsetting a chair—never laughs but the panes rattle in the window—I should hardly have thought *him* the precise person to gratify your pride, or answer the family ideal of a gentleman and a St. John."

"Gabriel," said Lucretia, sternly—"you have a biting tongue, and it is folly in me to resent those privileges which our fearful connection gives you. But—this raillery——"

"Come, come, I was wrong—forgive it!" interrupted Varney, who, dreading nothing else, dreaded much the rebuke of his grim step-mother.

"It is forgiven," said Lucretia, coldly, and with a slight waive of her hand; then she added, with composure:

"Long since—even while heiress of Laughton—I parted with mere pride in the hollow seemings of distinction. Had I not, should I have stooped to William Mainwaring?—What I then respected, amidst all the degradations I have known, I respect still; talent, ambition, intellect and will. Do you think I would exchange these in a son of mine, for the mere graces which a dancing-master can sell him? Fear not? Let us give but wealth to that intellect, and the world will see no clumsiness in the movements that march to its high places, and hear no discord in the laugh that triumphs over fools! But you have some news to communicate, or some proposal to suggest."

"I have both," said Varney. "In the first place, I have a letter from Grabman!"

Lucretia's eyes sparkled, and she snatched eagerly at the letter her son-in-law drew forth.

Liverpool, *October*, 1831.

"Jason,—I think I am on the road to success. Having first possessed myself of the fact, commemorated in the parish register, of the birth and baptism of Alfred Braddell's son, for we must proceed regularly in these matters, I next set my wits to work, to trace that son's exodus from the paternal mansion. I have hunted up an old woman-servant, Jane Prior, who lived with the Braddell's. She now thrives as a laundress; she is a rank puritan, and starches for the godly. She was at first very wary and resorved in her communications, but by siding with her prejudices and humors, and by the intercession of the Rev. Mr. Graves (of her own persuasion), I have got her to open her lips. It seems that these Braddell's lived very unhappily—the husband, a pious dissenter, had married a lady who turned out of a very different practice and belief. Jane Prior pitied her master, and detested her mistress. Some circumstances in the conduct of Mr

Braddell made the husband, who was then in his last illness, resolve, from a point of conscience, to save his child from what he deemed the contamination of her precepts and example. Mrs. Braddell was absent from Liverpool, on a visit, which was thought very unfeeling by the husband's friends; during this time Braddell was visited constantly by a gentleman (Mr. Ardworth), who differed from him greatly in some things, and seemed one of the carnal; but with whom agreement in politics (for they were both great politicians and republicans) seems to have established a link. One evening, when Mr. Ardworth was in the house, Jane Prior, who was the only maid servant (for they kept but two, and one had been just discharged), had been sent out to the apothecary's. On her return, Jane Prior going into the nursery, missed the infant; she thought it was with her master, but coming into his room, Mr. Braddell told her to shut the door, informed her that he had entrusted the boy to Mr. Ardworth, to be brought up in a righteous and pious manner, and implored and commanded her to keep this a secret from his wife, whom he was resolved, indeed, if he lived, not to receive back into his house. Braddell, however, did not survive more than two days this event. On his death, Mrs. Braddell returned, but circumstances connected with the symptoms of his malady, and a strong impression which haunted himself, and with which he had infected Jane Prior, that he had been poisoned, led to a posthumous examination of his remains. No trace of poison was however discovered, and suspicions that had been directed against his wife, could not be substantiated by law; still, she was regarded in so unfavorable a light by all who had known them both. she met with such little kindness or sympathy in her widowhood, and had been so openly denounced by Jane Prior, that it is not to be wondered at that she left the place as soon as possible. The house, indeed, was taken from her, for Braddell's affairs were found in such confusion, and his embarrassments so great, that everything was seized, and sold off; nothing left for the widow, nor for the child (if the last were ever discovered).

As may be supposed, Mrs. Braddell was at first very clamorous for the lost child, but Jane Prior kept her promise, and withheld all clue to it. And Mrs Braddell was forced to quit the place, in ignorance what had become of it; since then no one had heard of her, but Jane Prior says that she is sure 'she had come to no good.' Now, though much of this may be, no doubt, familiar to you, dear Jason, it is right, when I put the evidence before you, that you should know and guard against what to expect; and in any trial at law to prove the identity of Vincent Braddell, Jane Prior must be a principal witness, and will certainly not spare poor Mrs. Braddell. For the main point, however, viz., the suspicion of poisoning her husband, the inquest and verdict may set aside all alarm.

"My next researches have been directed on the track of Walter Ardworth, after leaving Liverpool, which (I find by the books at the inn where he lodged and was known) he did in debt to the innkeeper, the very night he received the charge of the child. Here, as yet, I am in fault; but I have ascertained that a woman, one of the sect, of the name of Joplin, living in a village fifteen miles from the town, had the care of some infant, to replace her own, which she had lost. I am going to this village to-morrow. But I cannot expect much in that quarter, since it would [illegible] at variance with your more probable belief that Walter Ardworth took the child at once to Mr. Fielden's. However, you see I have already gone very far in the evidence;—the birth of the child—the delivery of the child to Ardworth. I see a very pretty case already before us, and I do not now doubt for a moment of ultimate success.

"Yours,

"N. GRABMAN."

Lucretia read steadily, and with no change of countenance, to the last line of the letter. Then, as she put it down on the table before her, she repeated, with a tone of deep exultation—"No doubt of ultimate success!"

"You do not fear to brave all which the spite of this woman, Jane Prior, may prompt her to say against you?" asked Varney.

Lucretia's brow fell. "It is another torture," she said, "even to own my marriage with a low-born hypocrite. But I can endure it for the cause," she added, more haughtily. "Nothing can really hurt me in these obsolete aspersions, and this vague scandal. The inquest acquitted me, and the world will be charitable to the mother of him who has wealth and rank, and that vigorous genius which, if proved in obscurity, shall command opinion in renown."

"You are now, then, disposed at once to proceed to action. For Helen, all is prepared—the insurances settled—the trust for which I hold them on your behalf is signed and completed. But for Percival St. John, I await your directions. Will it be best first to prove your son's identity, or when morally satisfied that that proof is forthcoming, to remove betimes *both* the barriers to his inheritance. If we tarry for the last, the removal of St. John becomes more suspicious than it does at a time when you have no visible interest in his death. Besides, now we have the occasion, or can make it—can we tell how long it will last? Again, it will seem more natural that the lover should break his heart in the first shock of——"

"Ay," interrupted Lucretia, "I would have all thought and contemplation of crime at an end; when, clasping my boy to my heart, I can say—'Your mother's inheritance is yours.' I would not have a murder before my eyes, when they should look only on the fair prospects beyond. I would cast back all the hideous images into the rear of memory, so that hope may for once visit me again undisturbed. No, Gabriel, were I to speak for

ever, you would comprehend not what I grasp at in a son! It is at a future! Rolling a stone over the sepulchre of the past—it is as a resurrection into a fresh world—it is to know again one emotion not impure—one scheme not criminal. It is, in a word, to cease to be as myself, to think in another soul, to hear my heart beat in another form. All this I covet in a son. And when all this should smile before me in his image, shall I be plucked back again into my hell, by the consciousness that a new crime is to be done? No; wade quickly through the passage of blood, that we may dry our garments, and breathe the air, upon the bank where sun shines and flowers bloom!"

"So be it, then!" said Varney. "Before the week is out, I must be under the same roof as St. John.—Before the week is out, why not all meet in the old halls of Laughton?"

"Ay, in the halls of Laughton! on the hearth of our ancestors the deeds done for our descendants look less dark!"

"And first, to prepare the way, Helen should sicken in these fogs of London, and want change of air."

"Place before me that desk. I will read William Mainwaring's letters again and again, till from every shadow in the past a voice comes forth—'The child of your rival, your betrayer, your undoer, stands between the daylight and your son!'"

CHAPTER XV.

Varieties.

LEAVING the guilty pair to concert their schemes, and indulge their atrocious hopes, we accompany Percival to the hovel occupied by Becky Carruthers.

On following Beck into the room she rented, Precival was greatly surprised to find, seated comfortably on the only chair to be seen, no less a person than the worthy Mrs. Mivers. This good lady, in her spinster days, had earned her own bread by hard work. She had captivated Mr. Mivers when but a simple housemaid in the service of one of his relations. And while this humble condition in her earlier life may account for much in her language and manners which is now-a-days inconsonant with the breeding and education that characterize the wives of opulent tradesmen, so perhaps the remembrance of it made her unusually susceptible to the duties of charity. For there is no class of society more prone to pity and relieve the poor, than females in domestic service; and this virtue Mrs. Mivers had not laid aside, as many do, so soon as she was in a condition to practice it with effect. Mrs. Mivers blushed scarlet, on being detected in her visit of kindness, and hastened to excuse herself by the information that she belonged to a society of ladies for "the Bettering the Condition of the Poor," and that having just been informed of Mrs. Becky's destitute state, she had looked in to recommend her—a ventilator!

"It's quite shocking to see how little the poor attends to the proper wentilating their houses. No wonder there's so much typus about!" said Mrs. Mivers. "And for one-and-sixpence, we can introduce a stream of hair that goes up the chimbly, and carries away all that it finds!"

"I 'umbly thank you, marm," said the poor bundle of rags that went by the name of 'Becky,' as, with some difficulty, she contrived to stand in the presence of the benevolent visitor; "but, I'm much afeard, that the hair will make the rheumatiz werry rumpatious!"

"On the contrary—on the contrary," said Mrs. Mivers triumphantly, and she proceeded philosophically to explain, that all the fevers, aches, pains, and physical ills that harass the poor, arise from the want of an air-trap in the chimney, and a perforated net-work in the window-pane. Becky listened patiently; for Mrs. Mivers was only a philosopher in her talk, and she had proved herself anything but a philosopher in her actions, by the spontaneous present of five shillings, and the promise of a basket of victuals, and some good wine to keep the cold wind she invited to the apartment out of the stomach.

Percival imitated the silence of Becky, whose spirit was so bowed down by an existence of drudgery, that not even the sight of her foster-son could draw her attention from the respect due to a superior.

"And is this poor cranky-looking cretur your son, Mrs. Becky?" said the visitor, struck at last by the appearance of the ex-

Sweeper as he stood at the threshold, hat in hand.

"No, indeed, marm," answered Becky; "I often says—says—I—'child, you be the son of Sint Poll's.'"

Beck smiled proudly.

"It was agin the grit church, marm—but it's a long story. My poor good man had not a long been dead—as good a man as h-ever lived, marm," and Becky dropped a curtesy; "he fell off a scaffol, and pitched right on his ead—or I should not have come on the parish, marm—and that's the truth on't!"

"Very well, I shall call and hear all about it—a sad case, I dare say. You see, your husband should have subscribed to our Loan Society, and then they'd have found him a 'andsome coffin, and given three pounds to his widder. But the poor are so benighted in these parts. I'm sure, sir, I can't guess what brought you here?—but that's no business of mine. And how are all at Old Brompton?" —here Mrs. Mivers bridled indignantly. "There was a time when Miss Mainwaring was very glad to come and chat with Mr. M. and myself; but now 'rum has riz,' as the saying is—not but what I dare say it's not her fault, poor thing!—that stiff aunt of her's—*she* need not look so high—pride and poverty, forsooth!"

While delivering these conciliatory sentences, Mrs. Mivers had gathered up her gown, and was evidently in the bustle of departure. As she now nodded to Becky, Percival stepped up, and, with his irresistible smile, offered her his arm. Much surprised, and much flattered, Mrs. Mivers accepted it. As she did so, he gently detained her, while he said to Becky:

"My good friend, I have brought you the poor lad, to whom you have been a mother, to tell you that good deeds find their reward sooner or later. As for him, make yourself easy; he will inform you of the new step he has taken; and for you, good, kind-hearted creature, thank the boy you brought up, if your old age shall be made easy and cheerful. Now Beck, silly lad, go and tell all to your nurse! Take care of this step, Mrs. Mivers."

As soon as he was in the street, Percival, who, if amused at the ventilator, had seen the five shillings gleam on Becky's palm, and felt that he had found under the puce-colored gown a good woman's heart to understand him, gave Mrs. Mivers a short sketch of poor Beck's history and misfortunes, and so contrived to interest her in behalf of the nurse, that she willingly promised to become Percival's almoner, to execute his commission, to improve the interior of Becky's abode, and distribute weekly the liberal stipend he proposed to settle on the old widow. They had grown, indeed, quite friendly and intimate, by the time he reached the smart plate-glazed mahogany-colored *façade*, within which the flourishing business of Mr. Mivers was carried on; and when, knocking at the private door, promptly opened by a lemon-colored page, she invited him up stairs, it so chanced that the conversation had slid off to Helen, and Percival was sufficiently interested to bow assent, and to enter.

Though all the way up the stairs, Mrs. Mivers, turning back at every other step, did her best to impress upon her young visitor's mind the important fact, that they kept their household establishment at their 'willer,' and that their apartments in Fleet-street were only a 'conwenience'—the store set up by the worthy housewife upon her goods and chattels was sufficiently visible in the drugget that threaded its narrow way up the gay Brussels stair-carpet, and in certain layers of paper, which protected from the profanation of immediate touch, the mahogany hand-rail. And nothing could exceed the fostering care exhibited in the drawing-room, when, the door thrown open, admitted a view of its damask moreen curtains, pinned back from such impertinent sunbeams as could force their way through the foggy air of the east into the windows, and the ells of yellow muslin that guarded the frames, at least, of a collection of colored prints, and two kit-kat portraitures of Mr. Mivers and his lady, from the perambulations of the flies.

But Percival's view of this interior was somewhat impeded by his portly guide, who, uttering a little exclamation of surprise, stood motionless on the threshold, as she perceived Mr. Mivers seated by the hearth in close conference with a gentleman whom she had never seen before. At that hour, it was so rare an event in the life of Mr. Mivers to be found in the drawing-room, and that he should have an acquaintance unknown to his helpmate, was a circumstance so much rarer still, that Mrs.

Mivers may well be forgiven for keeping St. John standing at the door till she had recovered her amaze.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mivers rose in some confusion, and was apparently about to introduce his guest, when that gentleman coughed and pinched the host's arm significantly. Mr. Mivers coughed also, and stammered out—"A gentleman, Mrs. M.—a friend:—stay with us a day or two. Much honored—hum!"

Mrs. Mivers stared and curtseyed, and stared again. But there was an open, good-humored smile in the face of the visitor, as he advanced and took her hand, that attracted a heart very easily conciliated. Seeing that that was no moment for further explanation, she plumped herself into a seat, and said—

"But bless us and save us, I am keeping you standing, Mr. St. John!"

"St. John!" repeated the visitor, with a vehemence that startled Mrs. Mivers.

"Your name is St. John, sir—related to the St. Johns of Laughton!"

"Yes, indeed," answered Percival, with his shy, arch smiles, "Laughton at present has no worthier owner than myself."'

The gentleman made two strides to Percival, and shook him heartily by the hand.

"This is pleasant, indeed!" he exclaimed. "You must excuse my freedom; but I knew well poor old Sir Miles, and, my heart warms at the sight of his representative."

Percival glanced at his new acquaintance, and on the whole was prepossessed in his favor. He seemed somewhere on the sunnier side of fifty, with that superb yellow bronze of complexion which betokens long residence under eastern skies. Deep wrinkles near the eyes, and a dark circle round them, spoke of cares and fatigue, and perhaps dissipation. But he had evidently a vigor of constitution that had borne him passably through all; his frame was wiry and nervous; his eye bright and full of life; and there was that abrupt, unsteady, mercurial restlessness in his movements and manner, which usually accompanies the man whose sanguine temperament prompts him to concede to the impulse, and who is blessed or cursed with a superabundance of energy, according as circumstance may favor or judgment correct, that equivocal gift of constitution.

Percival said something appropriate in reply to so much cordiality paid to the account of the Sir Miles whom he had never seen, and seated himself,—coloring slightly under the influence of the fixed, pleased, and earnest look still bent upon him.

Searching for something else to say, Percival asked Mrs. Mivers if she had lately seen John Ardworth.

The guest, who had just reseated himself, turned his chair round at that question with such vivacity, that Mrs. Mivers heard it crack. Her chairs were not meant for such usage. A shade fell over her rosy countenance as she replied—

"No, indeed, (please, sir, them chairs is brittle?) No,—he is like Madam at Brompton, and seldom condescends to favor us now. It was but last Sunday we asked him to dinner. I am sure he need not turn up his nose at our roast beef and pudding!"

Here Mr. Mivers was taken with a violent fit of coughing, which drew off his wife's attention. She was afraid he had taken cold.

The stranger took out a large snuff-box, inhaled a long pinch of snuff, and said to St. John:

This Mr. John Ardworth, a pert enough Jackanapes, I suppose—a limb of the law, eh?"

"Sir," said Percival, gravely; "John Ardworth is my particular friend. It is clear that you know very little of him."

"That's true," said the stranger—"'pon my life, that's very true. But I suppose he's like all lawyers—cunning and tricky, conceited and supercilious, full of prejudice and cant, and a red-hot tory into the bargain. I know them, sir—I know them!"

"Well," answered St. John, half gaily, half angrily, "your general experience serves you very little here; for Ardworth is exactly the opposite of all you have described."

"Even in politics?"

"Why, I fear he is half a Radical—certainly more than a Whig," answered St. John, rather mournfully; for his own theories were all the other way, notwithstanding his unpatriotic forgetfulness of them, in his offer to assist Ardworth's entrance into parliament.

"I am very glad to hear it," cried the stranger, again taking snuff. "And this Madame at Brompton—perhaps I know her a little better than I do young Mr. Ardworth—Mrs. Brad—I mean Madame Dalibard!" and the

stranger glanced at Mr. Mivers, who was slowly recovering from some vigorous slaps on the back, administered to him by his wife, as a counter-irritant to the cough. "Is it true that she has lost the use of her limbs?"

Percival shook his head.

"And takes care of poor Helen Mainwaring, the orphan? Well, well! that looks amiable enough. I must see—I must see!"

"Who shall I say inquired after her, when I see Madame Dalibard?" asked Percival, with some curiosity.

"Who? Oh, Mr. Tomkins. She will not recollect him, though,"—and the stranger laughed, and Mr. Mivers laughed, too; and Mrs. Mivers, who, indeed, always laughed when other people laughed, laughed also. So Percival thought he ought to laugh for the sake of good company, and all laughed together, as he arose and took leave.

He had not, however, got far from the house, on his way to his cabriolet, which he had left by Temple Bar, when, somewhat to his surprise, he found Mr. Tomkins at his elbow.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. St. John, but I have only just returned to England, and on such occasions a man is apt to seem curious. This young lawyer; you see the elder Ardworth—(a good-for-nothing scamp!)—was a sort of friend of mine—not exactly friend, indeed, for, by Jove, I think he was a worse friend to me than he was to anybody else,—still I had a foolish interest for him, and should be glad to hear something more about any one bearing his name, than I can coax out of that droll little linen draper. You are really intimate with young Ardworth, eh?"

"Intimate! poor fellow, he will not let any one be that! He works too hard to be social. But I love him sincerely; and I admire him beyond measure."

"The dog has industry, then—that's good. And does he make debts, like that rascal, Ardworth, senior?"

"Really, sir, I must say, this tone with respect to Mr. Ardworth's father——"

"What the devil, sir! Do you take the father's part, as well as the son's?"

"I don't know anything about Mr. Ardworth, senior," said Percival, pouting; "but I do know that my friend would not allow any one to speak ill of his father in his presence; and I beg you, sir, to consider, that whatever would offend him, must offend me."

"Gad's my life! He's the luckiest young rogue to have such a friend. Sir, I wish you a very good day."

Mr. Tomkins took off his hat—bowed—and passing St. John with a rapid step, was soon lost to his eye amongst the crowd hurrying westward.

But our business being now rather with him than Percival, we leave the latter to mount his cabriolet, and we proceed with Mr. Mivers's mercurial guest on his eccentric way through the throng.

There was an odd mixture of thoughtful abstraction and quick observation in the soliloquy in which this gentleman indulged, as he walked briskly on.

"A pretty young spark, that St. John! A look of his father, but handsomer, and less affected. I like him. Fine shop that—very! London wonderfully improved. A hookah in that window!—God bless me!—a real hookah! This is all very good news about that poor boy—very. After all, he is not to blame if his mother was such a damnable——I must contrive to see and judge of him myself as soon as possible. Can't trust to others—too sharp for that! What an ugly dog that is, looking after me! It is certainly a bailiff. Hang it!—what do I care for bailiffs? Hem—hem!" And the gentleman thrust his hands into his pockets, and laughed, as the jingle of coin reached his ear through the din without. "Well, I must make haste to decide; for, really there is a very troublesome piece of business before me. Plague take her!—what can have become of the woman? I shall have to hunt out a sharp lawyer. But John's a lawyer himself. No—attorneys, I suppose, are the men. Gad! they were sharp enough when they had to hunt me! What's that great bill on the wall about?—'Down with the Lords.' Pooh, pooh! Master John Bull, you love Lords a great deal too much for that. A prettyish girl! English women are very good-looking, certainly. That Lucretia—what shall I do, *if*——Ah, time enough to think of her, when I have got over that mighty stiff *if!*"

In such cogitations and mental remarks our traveller whiled away the time, till he found himself in Piccadilly. There, a publisher's shop, (and he had that keen eye for shops

which betrays the stranger in London), with its new publications exposed at the window attracted his notice. Conspicuous amongst the rest was the open title-page of a book, at the foot of which was placed a placard, with the enticing words—'FOURTH EDITION: JUST OUT,' in red capitals. The title of the work struck his irritable curious fancy; he walked into the shop—asked for the volume—and while looking over the contents, with muttered ejaculations: "Good!—capital! why this reminds one of Horne Tooke! What's the price? very dear—must have it though—must. Ha! ha! home-thrust there!"—while thus turning over the leaves, and rending them assunder with his forefinger, regardless of the paper-cutter extended to him by the shopman, a gentleman pushing by him, asked if the publisher was at home: and as the shopman, bowing very low, answered, "Yes," the new-comer darted into a little recess behind the shop. Mr. Tomkins, who had looked up very angrily on being jostled so unceremoniously, started and changed color, when he saw the face of the offender. "Saints in heaven!" he murmured almost audibly; "what a look of that woman! and yet—no—it is gone!"

"Who is that gentleman?" he asked, abruptly, as he paid for his book.

The shopman smiled, but answered, "I don't know, sir."

"That's a lie!—you would never bow so low to a man you did not know!"

The shopman smiled again. "Why, sir, there are many who come to this house who don't wish us to know them."

"Ah, I understand! you are political publishes—afraid of libles, I dare say. Always the same thing in this cursed country, and then they tell us we are 'free!' So I suppose that gentlemen has written something William Pitt does not like. But, William Pitt!—ha—the's dead!—very true, so he is! Sir, this little book seems most excellent; but, in my time, a man would have been sent to Newgate for printing it."

While thus running on, Mr. Tomkins had edged himself pretty close to the recess, within which the last comer had disappeared; and there, seated on a high stool, he contrived to read and talk at the same time, but his eye and his ear were both turned every instant towards the recess.

The shopman, little suspecting that in so very eccentric, garrulous a person, he was permitting a spy to enroach upon the secrets of the house, continued to make up sundry parcels of the new publication which had so enchanted his customer, while he expatiated on the prodigious sensation the book had created; and while the customer himself had already caught enough of the low conversation within the recess to be aware that the author of the book was the very person who had so roused his curiosity.

Not till that gentleman, followed to the door by the polite publisher, had quitted the shop, did Mr. Tomkins put his volume in his pocket, and, with a familiar nod at the shopman, take himself off.

He was scarcely in the street, when he saw Percival St. John leaning out of his cabriolet, and conversing with the author he had discovered. He halted a moment irresolute, but the young man, in whom our reader recognizes John Ardworth, declining St. John's invitation to accompany him to Brompton, resumed his way through the throng; the cabriolet drove on; and Mr. Tomkins, though with a graver mien, and a steadier step, continued his desultory rambles. Meanwhile, John Ardworth strode gloomily back to his lonely chamber.

There, throwing himself on the well-worn chair before the crowded desk, he buried his face in his hands, and for some minutes he felt all that profound despondency, peculiar to those who have won fame, to add to the dark volume of experience the conviction of fame's nothingness. For some minutes, he felt an illiberal and ungrateful envy of St. John—so fair, so light-hearted, so favored by fortune, so rich in friends—in a mother's love, and in Helen's half-plighted troth. And he, from his very birth, cut off from the social ties of blood—no mother's kiss to reward the toils, or gladden the sports, of childhood—no father's cheering word up the steep hill of man!

And Helen, for whose sake he had so often, when his heart grew weary, nerved himself again to labor, saying—"Let me be rich, let me be great, and then I will dare to tell Helen that I love her!"—Helen smiling upon another, unconconscious of his pangs! What could fame bestow in compensation! What matter that strangers praised, and the babble of the world's running stream lingered its

brief moment round the pebble in its way. In the bitterness of his mood, he was unjust to his rival. All that exquisite, but half-concealed treasure of imagination and thought, which lay beneath the surface of Helen's childlike smile, he believed that he alone—he, soul of power and son of genius, was worthy to discover and to prize. In the pride not unfrequent with that kingliest of all aristocracies, the Chiefs of Intellect, he forgot the grandeur which invests the attributes of the heart—forgot that, in the lists of love, the heart is at least the equal of the mind. In the reaction that follows great excitement, Ardworth had morbidly felt, that day, his utter solitude—felt it in the streets through which he had passed—in the home to which he had returned—the burning tears, shed for the first time since childhood, forced themselves through his clasped fingers. At length, he rose, with a strong effort at self-mastery—some contempt of his weakness, and much remorse at his ungrateful envy.

He gathered together the soiled manuscript and dingy proofs of his book, and thrust them through the grimy bars of his grate; then, opening his desk, he drew out a small packet, with tremulous fingers, unfolding paper after paper, and gazed with eyes still moistened, on the relics kept till then, in the devotion of the only *sentiment* inspired by Eros, that had ever, perhaps, softened his iron nature: These were two notes from Helen—some violets she had once given him, and a little purse she had knitted for him (with a playful prophecy of future fortunes), when he had last left the vicarage. Nor blame him, ye who with more habitual romance of temper, and richer fertility of imagination, can reconcile the tenderest memories with the sternest duties, if he, with all his strength, felt that the associations connected with those tokens would but enervate his resolves, and embitter his resignation. You can guess not the extent of the sacrifice, the bitterness of the pang, when, averting his head, he dropped those relics on the hearth. The evidence of the desultory ambition, the tokens of the visionary love—the same flame leapt up to devour both! It was as the funeral pyre of his youth!

"So!" he said to himself, "let all that can divert me from the true ends of my life—consume!—Labor, take back your son."

An hour afterwards, and his clerk, returning home, found Ardworth employed as calmly as usual on his Law Reports.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Invitation to Laughton.

THAT day, when he called at Brompton, Percival reported to Madame Dalibard his interview with the eccentric Mr. Tomkins. Lucretia seemed chafed and disconcerted by the inquiries with which that gentleman had honored her, and as soon as Percival had gone, she sent for Varney. He did not come till late—she repeated to him what St. John had said of the stranger. Varney participated in her uneasy alarm. The name, indeed, was unknown to them, nor could they conjecture the bearer of so ordinary a patronymic; but there had been secrets enow in Lucretia's life, to render her apprehensive of encountering those who had known her in earlier years; and Varney feared lest any rumor reported to St. John might create his mistrust, or lessen the hold obtained upon a victim heretofore so unsuspicious. They both agreed in the expediency of withdrawing themselves and St. John, as soon as possible, from London, and frustrating Percival's chance of closer intercourse with the stranger, who had evidently aroused his curiosity.

The next day Helen was much indisposed, and the symtoms grew so grave towards the evening, that Madame Dalibard expressed alarm, and willingly suffered Percival (who had only been permitted to see Helen for a few minutes, when her lassitude was so extreme that she was obliged to retire to her room) to go in search of a physician: he returned with one of the most eminent of the faculty. On the way to Brompton, in reply to the questions of Dr. ——, Percival spoke of the dejection to which Helen was occasionally subject, and this circumstance confirmed Dr.——, after he had seen his patient, in his view of the case. In addition to some feverish and inflammatory symptons which he trusted his prescriptions would speedly remove, he found great nervous debility, and willingly fell in with the casual suggestion of

Varney, who was present, that a change of air would greatly improve Miss Mainwaring's general health, as soon as the temporary acute attack had subsided. He did not regard the present complaint very seriously, and reassured poor Percival by his cheerful mien and sanguine predictions. Percival remained at the house the whole day, and had the satisfaction, before he left, of hearing that the remedies had already abated the fever, and that Helen had fallen into a profound sleep. Walking back to town with Varney, the last said, hesitatingly—"You were saying to me, the other day, that you feared you should have to go, for a few days, both to Vernon Grange and to Laughton, as your steward wished to point out to you some extensive alterations in the management of your woods, to commence this autumn. As you were so soon coming of age, Lady Mary desired that her directions should yield to your own. Now, since Helen is recommended change of air, why not invite Madame Dalibard to visit you at one of these places? I would suggest Laughton. My poor mother-in-law, I know, longs to revisit the scene of her youth, and you could not compliment or conciliate her more than by such an invitation."

"Oh," said Percival, joyfully, "it would realize the fondest dream of my heart to see Helen under the old roof-tree of Laughton; but as my mother is abroad, and there is therefore no lady to receive them, perhaps——"

"Why," interrupted Varney, "Madame Dalibard herself is almost the very person whom *les bienséances* might induce you to select to do the honors of your house in Lady Mary's absence; not only as kinswoman to yourself, but as the nearest surviving relative of Sir Miles—the most immediate descendant of the St. Johns; mature her years and decorum of life, her joint kindred to Helen and yourself, surely remove every appearance of impropriety."

"If she thinks so, certainly—I am no accurate judge of such formalities. You could not oblige me more, Varney, than in pre-obtaining her consent to the proposal. Helen at Laughton!—Oh, blissful thought!"

"And in what air would she be so likely to revive?" said Varney, but his voice was thick and husky.

The ideas thus presented to him, almost banished its anxiety from Percival's breast. In a thousand delightful shapes they haunted him during the sleepless night. And when, the next morning, he found that Helen was surprisingly better, he pressed his invitation upon Madame Dalibard, with a warmth that made her cheek yet more pale, and the hand, which the boy grasped as he pleaded, as cold as the dead. But she briefly consented, and Percival, allowed a brief interview with Helen, had the rapture to see her smile in a delight as childlike as his own at the news he communicated, and listen, with swimming eyes, when he dwelt on the walks they should take together, amidst haunts to become henceforth dear to her as to himself. Fairyland dawned before them.

The visit of the physician justified Percival's heightened spirits. All the acuter symptons had vanished already. He sanctioned his patient's departure from town as soon as Madame Dalibard's convenience would permit, and recommended only a course of restorative medicines to strengthen the nervous system, which was to commence with the following morning, and be persisted in for some weeks. He dwelt much on the effect to be derived from taking these medicines, the first thing in the day, as soon as Helen woke. Varney and Madame Dalibard exchanged a rapid glance. Charmed with the success that in this instance had attended the skill of the great physician Percival, in his usual zealous benevolence, now eagerly pressed upon Madame Dalibard the wisdom of consulting Dr. —— for her own malady; and the doctor, putting on his spectacles, and drawing the chair nearer to the frowning cripple, began to question her of her state; but Madame Dalibard abruptly and discourteously put a stop to all interrogatories—she had already exhausted all remedies art could suggest—she had become reconciled to her deplorable infirmity, and lost all faith in physicians;—some day or other she might try the baths at Egra, but, till then, she must be permitted to suffer undisturbed.

The doctor, by no means wishing to undertake a case of chronic paralysis, rose smilingly, and with a liberal confession that the German baths were sometimes extremely efficacious in such complaints, pressed Percival's outstretched hand, then slipped his own into

his pocket, and bowed his way out of the room.

Relieved from all apprehension, Percival very good-humoredly received the hint of Madame Dalibard, that the excitement through which she had gone for the last twenty-four hours, rendered her unfit for his society; and went home to write to Laughton, and prepare all things for the reception of his guests. Varney accompanied him. Percival found Beck in the hall, already much altered, and embellished, by a new suit of livery. The ex-sweeper stared hard at Varney, who, without recognizing, in so smart a shape, the squalid tatterdemalion who had lighted him up the stairs to Mr. Grabman's apartments, passed him by into Percival's little study, on the ground-floor.

"Well, Beck," said Percival, ever mindful of others, and attributing his groom's astonished gaze at Varney to his admiration of that gentleman's showy exterior—"I shall send you down to the country to-morrow with two of the horses—so you may have to-day to yourself, to take leave of your nurse. I flatter myself you will find her rooms a little more comfortable than they were yesterday."

Beck heard with a bursting heart; and his master, giving him a cheering tap on the shoulder, left him to find his way into the streets, and to Becky's abode.

He found, indeed, that the last had already undergone the magic transformation which is ever at the command of godlike wealth. Mrs. Mivers, who was naturally prompt and active, had had pleasure in executing Percival's commission. Early in the morning, floors had been scrubbed—the windows cleaned—the ventilator fixed;—then followed porters with chairs and tables, and a wonderful Dutch clock, and new bedding, and a bright piece of carpet; and then came two servants belonging to Mrs. Mivers to arrange the chattels; and finally, when all was nearly completed, the Avatar of Mrs. Mivers herself, to give the last finish with her own mittened hands, and in her own housewifely apron.

The good lady was still employed in ranging a set of tea-cups on the shelves of the dresser, when Beck entered; and his old nurse, in the overflow of her gratitude, hobbled up to her foundling, and threw her arms round his neck.

"That's right!" said Mrs. Mivers, good-humoredly, turning round, and wiping the tear from her eye. "You ought to make much of him, poor lad; he has turned out a God-send, indeed; and upon my word, he looks very respectable in his new clothes. But what is this—a child's coral?" as, opening a drawer in the dresser, she discovered Beck's treasure. "Dear me, it is a very handsome one—why these bells look like gold!"—and, suspicion of her *protégé's* honesty, for a moment, contracted her thoughtful brow—"however on earth did you come by this, Mrs. Becky?"

"Sure and sartin," answered Becky, dropping her mutilated curtsey, "I be's glad it be found now, instead of sum days afore, or I might have been vicked enough to let it go vith the rest to the pop-shop; and I'm sure the time's out of my mind, ven that 'ere boy was a h-urchin, that I've risted the timtashung, and said, 'No, Becky Carruthers, that maun't go to my h-uncle's!"

"And why not, my good woman?"

"Lor' love you, marm, if that currll could speak, who knows vot it might say—eh, lad, who knows? You sees, marm, my good man had not a long been dead—I could not a get no vork, no vays—'Becky Carruthers,' says I, 'you must go out in the streets a begging!' I niver thought I should a come to that. But my poor husband, you sees, marm, fell from a scaffol,—as good a man as h-ever——"

"Yes, yes, you told me all that before," said Mrs. Mivers, growing impatient, and already diverted from her interest in the coral by a new cargo, all bright from the tinman, which, indeed, no less instantaneously, absorbed the admiration of both Beck and his nurse. And what with the inspection of these articles, and the comments each provoked, the coral rested in peace on the dresser, till Mrs. Mivers, when just about to renew her inquiries, was startled by the sound of the Dutch clock striking four, a voice which reminded her of the lapse of time, and her own dinner hour. So, with many promises to call again, and have a good chat with her humble friend, she took her departure, amidst the blessings of Becky, and the less noisy, but not less grateful salutations of Beck.

Very happy was the evening these poor creatures passed together over their first cup of

tea from the new bright copper kettle, and the almost-forgotten luxury of crumpets, in which their altered circumstances permitted them, without extravagance to indulge. In the course of conversation, Beck communicated how much he had been astonished by recognizing the visitor of Grabman, the provoker of the irritable grave-stealer, in the familiar companion of his master; and when Becky told him how often in the domestic experience her avocation of charing had accumulated, she had heard of the ruin brought on rich young men, by gamblers and sharpers, Beck promised to himself to keep a sharp eye on Grabman's showy acquaintance. "For master is but a babe like," said he, majestically; "and I'd be cut into mincemeat afore I'd let an 'air on his 'ead come to 'arm, if so be's h-as ow I could perwent it."

We need not say that his nurse confirmed him in these good resolutions.

"And now," said Beck, when the time came for parting, "you'll keep from the gin-shop, old 'oman, and not shame the young master?"

"Sartin sure," answered Becky; "it is only ven vun is down in the vorld that vun goes to the licker-shop. Now, h-indeed,"—and she looked round very proudly—"I 'as a 'spectable stashion, and I vouldn't go for to lower it, and let 'em say that Becky Carruthers does not know how to conduct herself. The curril will be safe enuff now—but praps you had best take it yourself, lad."

"Vot should I do vith it? I've had enuff of the 'sponsibility. Put it up in a 'ankerchiff, and praps ven master gets married, and 'as a babby vot's teethin', he vill say, 'Thank ye, Beck, for your curril.' Vould not that make us proud, mammy?"

Chuckling heartily at that vision, Beck kissed his nurse, and trying hard to keep himself upright, and do credit to the dignity of his cloth, returned to his new room over the stables.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Waking of the Serpent.

AND how, O Poet of the sad belief, and eloquence, "like ebony at once dark and splendid," * how couldst thou, august Lucretius, deem it but sweet to behold from the steep the strife of the great sea, or, safe from the peril, gaze on the wrath of the battle, or serene in the temples of the wise, look afar on the wanderings of human error? Is it so sweet to survey the ills from which thou art delivered? Shall not the strong law of SYMPATHY find thee out, and thy heart rebuke thy philosophy? Not sweet, indeed, can be man's shelter in self, when he says to the storm, "I have no bark on the sea;" or to the gods of the battle, "I have no son in the slaughter;"—when he smiles unmoved upon Woe, and murmurs, "Weep on, for these eyes know no tears;"—when unappalled, he beholdeth the black deeds of crime, and cries to his conscience, "Thou art calm:"—Yet solemn is the sight to him, who lives in all life; seeks for Nature in the storm, and Providence in the battle; loses self in the woe; probes his heart in the crime; and owns no philosophy that sets him free from the fetters of man. Not in vain do we scan all the contrasts in the large frame-work of civilized earth, if we note, "when the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast togther." Range, O Art, through all space, clasp together all extremes, shake idle wealth from its lethargy, and bid States look in hovels, where the teacher is dumb, and Reason unweeded runs to rot!

Bid haughty Intellect pause in its triumph, and doubt if intellect alone can deliver the soul from its tempters!—Only *that* lives uncorrupt, which preserves in all seasons the human affections in which the breath of God breathes, and is! Go forth to the world, O Art!—go forth to the innocent, the guilty;—the wise, and the dull!—go forth as the still voice of Fate!—speak of the insecurity even of Goodness below!—carry on the rapt vision of suffering Virtue through "the doors of the shadows of death!"—show the dim revelation symbolled forth in the Tragedy of old!—how incomplete is man's destiny, how undeveloped is the justice divine, if Antigone sleep eternally in the ribs of the rock, and Œdipus vanish for ever in the Grove of the Furies! Here, below, "the waters are hid with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen!" But above liveth He "who can bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and loose the bands of Orion." Go with Fate over the bridge, and she vanishes in the land beyond the gulf! Behold where

* It was said of Tertullian, that 'his style was like ebony, dark and splendid'"

the Eternal demands Eternity for the progress of His creatures, and the vindication of His justice!

It was past midnight, and Lucretia sat alone in her dreary room; her head buried on her bosom, her eyes fixed on the ground, her hands resting on her knees:—it was an image of inanimate prostration and decrepitude that might have moved compassion to its depth. The door opened, and Martha entered, to assist Madame Dalibard, as usual, to retire to rest. Her mistress slowly raised her eyes at the noise of the opening door, and those eyes took their searching, penetrating acuteness, as they fixed upon the florid, nor uncomely countenance of the waiting-woman.

In her starched cap, her sober-colored stuff gown—in her prim, quiet manner, and a certain sanctified demureness of aspect, there was something in the first appearance of this woman, that impressed you with the notion of respectability, and inspired confidence in those steady, good qualities which we seek in a trusty servant. But, more closely examined, an habitual observer might have found much to qualify, perhaps to disturb, his first prepossessions. The exceeding lowness of the forehead, over which that stiff, harsh hair was so puritanically parted—the severe hardness of those thin, small lips, so pursed up and constrained—even a certain dull cruelty in those light, cold blue eyes, might have caused an uneasy sentiment, almost approaching to fear. The fat grocer's spoiled child instinctively recoiled from her, when she entered the shop to make her household purchases—the old, grey-whiskered terrier dog, at the public house, slunk into the tap when she crossed the threshold.

Madame Dalibard silently suffered herself to be wheeled into the adjoining bed-room, and the process of disrobing was nearly completed before she said, abruptly—

"So you attended Mr. Varney's uncle in his last illness. Did he suffer much?"

"He was a poor creature, at best," answered Martha; "but he gave me a deal of trouble afore he went. He was a scranny corpse when I strecked him out."

Madame Dalibard shrank from the hands at that moment employed upon herself, and said—

"It was not, then, the first corpse you have laid out for the grave?"

"Not by many."

"And did any of those you so prepared, die of the same complaint?"

"I can't say, I'm sure," returned Martha. "I never inquires how folks die; my bizness was to nurse 'em till all was over, and then to sit up. As they say in my country—'Riving Pike wears a hood, when the weather bodes ill.'"*

"And when you sat up with Mr. Varney's uncle, did you feel no fear in the dead of the night?—that corpse before you—no fear?"

"Young Mr. Varney said I should come to no harm. Oh, he's a clever man. What should I fear, ma'am?" answered Martha, with a horrid simplicity.

"You have belonged to a very religious sect, I think I have heard you say—a sect not unfamiliar to me—a sect to which great crime is very rarely known?"

"Yes, ma'am, some of 'em be tame enough, but others be weel† deep!"

"You do not believe what they taught you?"

"I did, when I was young and silly."

"And what disturbed your belief?"

"Ma'am, the man what taught me, and my mother afore me, was the first I ever kep company with," answered Martha, without a change in her florid hue, which seemed fixed in her cheek, as the red in an autumn leaf. "After he had ruined me, as the girls say, he told me as how it was all sham!"

"You loved him, then?"

"The man was well enough, ma'am, and he behaved handsome, and got me a husband. I've known better days."

"You sleep well at night?"

"Yes, ma'am, thank you. I loves my bed."

"I have done with you," said Madame Dalibard, stifling a groan, as now, placed in her bed, she turned to the wall. Martha extinguished the candle, leaving it on the table by the bed, with a book and a box of matches, for Madame Dalibard was a bad sleeper, and often read in the night. She then drew the curtains, and went her way.

It might be an hour after Martha had retired to rest, that a hand was stretched from the bed, that the candle was lighted, and Lucretia Dali-

* "If Riving Pike do wear a hood,
The day, be sure, will ne'er be good."
—A LANCASHIRE DISTICH.

† Weel.—whirlpool.

bard rose; with a sudden movement she threw aside the coverings, and stood in her long night-gear on the floor. Yes, the helpless, parâlyzed cripple rose—was on her feet—tall, elastic, erect! It was as a resuscitation from the grave. Never was change more startling than that simple action effected—not in the form alone, but the whole character of the face. The solitary light streamed upward on a countenance, on every line of which spoke sinister power and strong resolve. If you had ever seen her before, in her false crippled state, prostrate and helpless, and could have seen her then—those eyes, if haggard still, now full of life and vigor—that frame, if spare, towering aloft in commanding stature, perfect in its proportions as a Grecian image of Nemesis—your amaze would have merged into terror, so preternatural did the transformation appear!—so did aspect and bearing contradict the very character of her sex; uniting the two elements, most formidable in man or in fiend—wickedness and power!

She stood a moment motionless, breathing loud, as if it were a joy to breathe free from restraint, and then, lifting the light, and gliding to the adjoining room, she unlocked a bureau in the corner, and bent over a small casket, which she opened with a secret spring.

Reader, cast back you eye to that passage in this history, when Lucretia Clavering took down the volume from the niche in the tapestried chamber at Laughton, and numbered, in thought, the hours left to her uncle's life. Look back on the ungrateful thought—behold, how it has swelled and ripened into the guilty deed! There, in that box, Death guards his treasure-crypt. There, all the science of Hades numbers its murderous inventions. As she searched for the ingredients her design had pre-selected, something heavier than those small packets she deranged, fell to the bottom of the box with a low and hollow sound. She started at the noise, and then smiled, in scorn of her momentary fear, as she took up the ring that had occasioned the sound—a ring plain and solid, like those used as signets in the Middle Ages, with a large dull opal in the centre. What secret could that bauble have in common with its ghastly companions in Death's crypt? This had been found amongst Olivier's papers; a note in that precious manuscript, which had given to the hands of his successors the keys of the grave, had discovered the mystery of its uses.

By the pressure of the hand, at the touch of a concealed spring, a barbed point flew forth, steeped in venom, more deadly than the Indian extracts from the bag of the cobra-capella,—a venom to which no antidote is known, which no test can detect. It corrupts the whole mass of the blood—it mounts in frenzy and fire to the brain—it rends the soul from the body in spasm and convulsion. But examine the dead, and how divine the effect of the cause?—how go back to the records of the Borgias, and amidst all the scepticism of times in which, happily, such arts are unknown, unsuspected, learn from the hero of Machiavel how a clasp of the hand can get rid of a foe? Easier and more natural to point to the living puncture in the skin, and the swollen flesh round it, and dilate on the danger a rusty nail—nay, a pin, can engender—when the humorous are peccant, and the blood is impure! The fabrication of that bauble, the discovery of Borgia's device, was the masterpiece in the science of Dalibard; a curious and philosophical triumph of research, hitherto unused by its inventor and his heirs; for that casket is rich in the choice of more gentle materials; but the use yet may come. As she gazed on the ring, there was a complacent and proud expression on Lucretia's face.

"Dumb token of Cæsar Borgia!" she murmured—"him of the wisest head and the boldest hand that ever grasped at empire;—whom Machiavel the virtuous, rightly praised as the model of accomplished ambition! Why should I falter in the paths which he trod with his royal step, only because my goal is not a throne? Every circle is as complete in itself, whether rounding a globule or a star. Why groan in the belief that the mind defiles itself by the darkness through which it glides on its object, or the mire through which it ascends to the hill? Murderer as he was, poisoner, and fratricide—did blood clog his intellect! or crime impoverish the luxury of his genius? Was his verse less melodious,* or his love of art less intense, or his eloquence less per-

* It is well known that Cæsar Borgia was both a munificent patron and an exquisite appreciator of art—we l known also are his powers of persuasion; but the general reader may not perhaps be acquainted with the fact, that this terrible criminal was also a poet.

suasive, because he sought to remove every barrier, revenge every wrong, crush every foe?"

In the wondrous corruption to which her mind had descended, thus murmured Lucretia. Intellect had been so long made her sole god, that the very monster of history was lifted to her reverence by his ruthless intellect alone; lifted, in that mood of feverish excitement, when conscience, often less silenced, lay crushed under the load of the deed to come, into an example and a guide.

Though, at times, when looking back, oppressed by the blackest despair, no remorse of the past ever weakened those nerves, when the Hour called up its demon, and the Will ruled the rest of the human being as a machine.

She replaced the ring—she reclosed the casket, and relocked its depository; then passed again into the adjoining chamber.

A few minutes afterwards, and the dim light that stole from the heavens (in which the moon was partially overcast), through the casement on the staircase, rested on a shapeless figure, robed in black from head to foot—a figure so obscure and indefinable in outline, so suited to the gloom in its hue, so stealthy and rapid in its movements, that had you started from sleep, and seen it on your floor, you would, perforce, have deemed that your fancy had befooled you!

Thus darkly, through the darkness, went the Poisoner to her prey.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Retrospect.

We have now arrived at that stage in this history when it is necessary to look back on the interval in Lucretia's life—between the death of Dalibard, and her re-introduction, in the second portion of our tale.

One day, without previous notice or warning, Lucretia arrived at William Mainwaring's house; she was in the deep weeds of widowhood, and that garb of mourning sufficed to add Susan's tenderest commiseration to the warmth of her affectionate welcome. Lucretia appeared to have forgiven the past, and to have conquered its more painful recollections; she was gentle to Susan, though she rather suffered than returned her caresses; she was open and frank to Willliam. Both felt inexpressibly grateful for her visit—the forgiveness it betokened, and the confidence it implied. At this time, no condition could be more promising and prosperous than that of the young banker. From the first, the most active partner in the bank, he had now virtually almost monopolized the business. The senior partner was old and infirm; the second had a bucolic turn, and was much taken up by the care of a large farm he had recently purchased, so that Mainwaring, more and more trusted and honored, became the sole managing administrator of the firm. Business throve in his able hands; and with patient and steady perseverance there was little but what, before middle age was attained, his competence would have swelled into a fortune sufficient to justify him in realizing the secret dream of his heart—the parliamentary representation of the town in which he had already secured the affection and esteem of the inhabitants.

It was not long before Lucretia detected the ambition William's industry but partially concealed; it was not long before, with the ascendency natural to her will and her talents, she began to exercise considerable, though unconscious, influence over a man in whom a thousand good qualities, and some great talents were unhappily accompanied by infirm purpose and weak resolutions. The ordinary conversation of Lucretia, unsettled his mind and inflamed his vanity—a conversation able, aspiring, full both of knowledge drawn from books, and of that experience of public men, which her residence in Paris—(whereon, with its new and greater Charlemagne, the eyes of the world were turned) had added to her acquisitions in the lore of human life. Nothing more disturbs a mind like William Mainwaring's than that species of eloquence which rebukes its patients in the present, by inflaming all it hopes in the future. Lucretia had none of the charming babble of women—none of that tender interest in household details, in the minutiæ of domestic life, which relaxes the intellect while softening the heart. Hard and vigorous, her sentences came forth in eternal appeal to the reason, or address to the sterner passions in which love has no share. Beside

this strong thinker, poor Susan's sweet talk seemed frivolous and inane. Her soft hold upon Mainwaring loosened: He ceased to consult her upon business—he began to repine that the partner of his lot could have little sympathy with his dreams—more often and more bitterly now did his discontented glance, in his way homeward, rove to the roof-tops of the rural member for the town; more eagerly did he read the parliamentary debates—more heavily did he sigh at the thought of eloquence denied a vent, and ambition delayed in its career.

When arrived at this state of mind, Lucretia's conversation took a more worldly, a more practical turn. Her knowledge of the speculators of Paris instructed her pictures of bold ingenuity creating sudden wealth; she spoke of fortunes made in a day—of *parvenus* bursting into *millionaires*—of wealth as the necessary instrument of ambition, as the arch ruler of the civilized world. Never once, be it observed, in these temptations, did Lucretia address herself to the heart—the ordinary channels of vulgar seduction was disdained by her; she would not have stooped so low as Mainwaring's love, could she have commanded or allured it; she was willing to leave to Susan the husband reft from her own passionate youth, but leave him with the brand on his brow and the worm at his heart—a scoff and a wreck.

At this time, there was in that market town, one of those adventurous speculative men, who are the more dangerous impostors, because imposed upon by their own sanguine chimeras, who have a plausibility in their calculations, an earnestness in their arguments, which account for the dupes they daily make in our most sober and wary of civilized communities. Unscrupulous in their means, yet really honest in the belief that their objects can be attained, they are at once the rogues and fanatics of Mammon! This person was held to have been fortunate in some adroit speculations in the corn trade, and he was brought too frequently into business with Mainwaring not to be a frequent visitor at the house. In him, Lucretia saw the very instrument of her design, she led him on to talk of business as a game—of money as a realizer of cent, per cent.—she drew him into details—she praised him, she admired. In his presence she seemed only to hear him—in his absence, musingly, she started from silence to exclaim on the acuteness of his genius and the accuracy of his figures. Soon the tempter at Mainwaring's heart gave signification to these praises—soon this adventurer became his most intimate friend. Scarcely knowing why, never ascribing the change to her sister, poor Susan wept, amazed at Mainwaring's transformation—no care now for the new books from London, or the roses in the garden!—the music on the instrument was unheeded! Books, roses, music!—what are those trifles to a man thinking upon cent. per cent.? Mainwaring's very countenance altered—it lost its frank, affectionate beauty;—sullen abstracted, morose—it showed that some great care was at the core. Then Lucretia herself began grievingly to notice the change to Susan—gradually she altered her tone with regard to the speculator, and hinted vague fears, and urged Susan to remonstrance and warning. As she anticipated, warning and remonstrance came in vain to the man, who comparing Lucretia's mental power to Susan's, had learned to despise the unlearned timid sense of the last.

It is unnecessary to trace this change in Mainwaring, step by step, or to measure the time which sufficed to his reason and blind his honor. In the midst of schemes and hopes, which the lust of gold now pervaded, came a thunderbolt. An anonymous letter to the head partner of the bank, provoked suspicions that led to minute examination of the accounts. It seemed that sums had been irregularly advanced (upon bills drawn upon men of straw) to the speculator by Mainwaring; and the destination of these sums could be traced to gambling operations in trade, in which Mainwaring had a private interest and partnership. So great, as we have said, had been the confidence placed in William's abilities and honor, that the facilities afforded him, in the disposal of the joint stock, far exceeded those usually granted to the partner of a firm, and the breach of trust appeared the more flagrant from the extent of the confidence misplaced. Meanwhile, William Mainwaring, though as yet unconscious of the proceedings of his partners, was gnawed by anxiety and remorse, not unmixed with hope. He depended upon the result of a bold specu-

lation in the purchase of shares in a Canal Company, a bill for which was then before Parliament, with (as he was led to believe) a certainty of success. The sums he had, on his own responsibility, abstracted from the joint account were devoted to this adventure. But to do him justice, he never dreamed of appropriating the profits anticipated, to himself. Though knowing that the bills, on which the monies had been advanced, were merely nominal deposits, he had confidently calculated on the certainty of success for the speculations, to which the proceeds so obtained were devoted, and he looked forward to the moment when he might avow what he had done, and justify it by doubling the capital withdrawn. But to his inconceivable horror, the bill of the Canal Company was rejected in the Lords—the shares bought at a premium went down to zero; and, to add to his perplexity, the speculator abruptly disappeared from the town. In this crisis, he was summoned to meet his indignant associates.

The evidence against him was morally damning, if not legally conclusive. The unhappy man heard all in the silence of despair. Crushed and bewildered, he attempted no defence. He asked but an hour to sum up the losses of the bank, and his own; they amounted within a few hundreds to the ten thousand pounds he had brought to the firm, and which, in the absence of marriage-settlements, was entirely at his own disposal. This sum he at once resigned to his associates, on condition that they should defray from it his personal liabilities. The money thus repaid, his partners naturally relinquished all further inquiry. They were moved by pity for one so gifted and so fallen—they even offered him a subordinate, but lucrative situation, in the firm in which he had been partner: but Mainwaring wanted the patience and resolution to work back the redemption of his name—perhaps, ultimately, of his fortunes. In the fatal anguish of his shame and despair, he fled from the town, his flight confirmed for ever the rumors against him—rumors worse than the reality. It was long before he even admitted Susan to the knowledge of the obscure refuge he had sought; there, at length, she joined him. Meanwhile, what did Lucretia?—she sold nearly half of her own fortune, constituted principally of the moiety of her portion, which, at Dalibard's death, and passed to herself as survivor and partly of the share in her deceased husband's effects, which the French law awarded to her; and with the proceeds of this sum she purchased an annuity for her victims?

Was this strange generosity the act of mercy—the result of repentance? No; it was one of the not least subtle and delicious refinements of her revenge. To know him who had rejected her—the rival who had supplanted—the miserable pensioners of her bounty, was dear to her haughty and disdainful hate. The lust of power, ever stronger in her than avarice, more than reconciled her to the sacrifice of gold;—yes, here, she, the despised, the degraded—had power still;—her wrath had ruined the fortunes of her victim, blasted the repute, embittered and desolated evermore the future,—now her contemptuous charity fed the wretched lives that she spared in scorn. She no small difficulty, it is true, in persuading Susan to accept this sacrifice, and she did so only by sustaining her sister's belief, that the past yet could be retrieved—that Mainwaring's energies could yet rebuild their fortunes,—and that as the annuity was at any time redeemable, the aid therefore was only temporary. With this understanding, Susan, overwhelmed with gratitude, weeping, and broken-hearted, departed to join the choice of her youth. As the men, deputed by the auctioneer to arrange the ticket the furniture for sale, entered the desolate house, Lucretia then, with the step of a conquerer, passed from the threshold.

"Ah!" she murmured as she paused, and gazed on the walls—"ah, they were happy when I first entered those doors!—happy in each other's tranquil love—happier still, when they deemed I had forgiven the wrong, and abjured the past! How honored was then their home! How knew I then, for the first time, what the home of love can be? And who had destroyed for me, upon all the earth, a home like theirs?—they on whom that home smiled with its serene and taunting peace!—I—I, the guest!—I—I, the abandoned!—the betrayed—what dark memories were on my soul!—what a hell boiled within my bosom!—Well might those memories take each a voice to accuse them!—well, from that hell, might rise the Alecto! Their lives were in my power!—my fatal dowry at my command

—rapid death, or slow consuming torture;—but to have seen each cheer the other to the grave, lighting every downward step with the eyes of love—vengeance, so urged, would have fallen only on myself! Ha! deceiver, didst thou plume thyself, forsooth, on spotless reputation!—didst thou stand, *me* by thy side, amongst thy perjured household gods, and talk of honor? Thy home—it is reft from thee!—thy reputation, it is a scoff—thine honor, it is a ghost that shall haunt thee! Thy love, can it linger yet?—Shall the soft eyes of thy wife not burn into thy heart, and shame turn love into loathing? Wrecks of my vengeance—minions of my bounty—I did well to let ye live! I shake the dust from my feet on your threshold;—live on—homeless, hopeless, and childless! The curse is fulfilled!"

From that hour, Lucretia never paused from her career to inquire further of her victim;—she never entered into communication with either. They knew not her address, nor her fate, nor she theirs. As she had reckoned, Mainwaring made no effort to recover himself from his fall. All the high objects that had lured his ambition, were gone from him evermore. No place in the state, no authority in the senate, awaits in England the man with a blighted name. For the lesser objects of life, he had no heart, and no care. They lived in obscurity in a small village in Cornwall, till the Peace allowed them to remove to France. The rest of their fate is known.

Meanwhile, Lucretia removed to one of those smaller Londons—resorts of pleasure and idleness, with which rich England abounds, and in which widows of limited income can make poverty seem less plebeian. And now, to all those passions that had hitherto raged within her, a dismal apathy succeeded. It was the great calm in her sea of life. The winds fell, and the sails drooped. Her vengeance satisfied, that, which she had made so preternaturally the main object of existence, once fulfilled, left her in youth objectless.

She strove at first to take pleasure in the society of the place, but its frivolities and pettiness of purpose soon wearied that masculine and grasping mind, already made insensible to the often healthful, often innocent, excitement of trifles, by the terrible ordeal it had passed. Can the touch of the hand, scorched by the burning iron, feel pleasure in the softness of silk, or the light down of the cygnet's plume? She next sought such relief as study could afford; and her natural bent of thought, and her desire to vindicate her deeds to herself, plunged her into the fathomless abyss of metaphysical inquiry, with the hope to confirm into positive assurance her earlier scepticism—with the atheist's hope to annihilate the soul, and banish the presiding God. But no voice that could satisfy her reason came from those dreary deeps: contradiction on contradiction met her in the maze. Only when, wearied with book-lore, she turned her eyes to the visible nature, and beheld everwhere harmony, order, system, contrivance, art, did she start with the amaze and awe of instinctive conviction; and the natural religion revolted from her cheerless ethics! Then, came one of those sudden reactions common with strong passions and exploring minds—but more common with women, however manlike, than with men. Had she lived in Italy then, she had become a nun! For in this woman, unlike Varney and Dalibard, the conscience could never be utterly silenced. In her choice of evil, she found only torture to her spirit in all the respites afforded to the occupations it indulged. When employed upon ill, remorse gave way to the zest of scheming; when the ill was done, remorse came with the repose.

It was in this peculiar period of her life that Lucretia, turning everywhere, and desperately, for escape from the past, became acquainted with some members of one of the most rigid of the sects of dissent. At first, she permitted herself to know and commune with these persons from a kind of contemptuous curiosity; she desired to encourage, in contemplating them, her experience of the follies of human nature; but in that crisis of her mind, in those struggles of her reason, whatever showed that which she yearned most to discover—viz., earnest faith, rooted and genuine conviction, whether of annihilation or of immortality—a philosophy that might reconcile her to crime by destroying the providence of good, or a creed that could hold out the hope of redeeming the past, and exorcising sin by the mystery of a Divine sacrifice,—had over her a power which she had not imagined or divined Gradually the intense convictions of her new associates disturbed and infected her. Their

affirmation, that as we are born in wrath, so sin is our second nature, our mysterious heritage, seemed, to her understanding, willing to be blinded, to imply excuses for her past misdeeds. Their assurances that the worst sinner may become the most earnest saint—that through but one act of the will, resolute faith, all redemption is to be found,—these affirmations and these assurances, which have so often restored the guilty, and remodelled the human heart, made a salutary, if brief, impression upon her. Nor were the lives of these dissenters), for the most part, austerely moral), nor the peace and self-complacency which they evidently found in the satisfaction of conscience and fulfilment of duty, without an influence over her, that, for awhile, both chastened and soothed.

Hopeful of such a convert, the good teachers strove hard to confirm the seeds, springing up from the granite and amidst the weeds; and amongst them came one man more eloquent, more seductive than the rest, Alfred Braddell. This person, a trader at Liverpool, was one of those strange living paradoxes that can rarely be found out of a commercial community. He himself had been a convert to the sect, and like most converts, he pushed his enthusiasm into the bigotry of the zealot. He saw no salvation out of the pale into which he had entered; but though his belief was sincere, it did not genially operate on his practical life; with the most scrupulous attention to forms, he had the worldliness and cunning of the carnal. He had abjured the vices of the softer senses, but not that which so seldom wars on the decorums of outer life. He was essentially a money-maker—close, acute, keen, over-reaching. Good works with him were indeed as nothing—faith, the all in all: He was one of the elect, and could not fall. Still in this man there was all the intensity which often characterizes a mind in proportion to the narrowness of its compass-that intensity gave fire to his gloomy eloquence, and strength to his obstinate will. He saw Lucretia, and his zeal for her conversion soon expanded into love for her person, yet that love was secondary to his covetousness. Though ostensibly in a flourishing business, he was greatly distressed for money to carry on operations which swelled beyond the reach of his capital; his fingers itched for the sum which Lucretia had still at her disposal. But the seeming sincerity of the man, the persuasion of his goodness, his reputation for sanctity, deceived her; she believed herself honestly and ardently beloved, and by one who could guide her back, if not to happiness, at least to repose. She herself loved him not, she could love no more. But it seemed to her a luxury to find some one she could trust, she could honor. If you had probed into the recesses of her mind at that time, you would have found that no religious belief was there settled—only the desperate *wish* to believe—only the disturbance of all previous infidelity—only a restless gnawing desire to escape from memory, to emerge from the gulf. In this troubled, impatient, disorder of mind and feeling, she hurried into a second marriage as fatal as the first.

For awhile she bore patiently all the privations of that ascetic household; assisted in all those external formalities, centered all her intellect within that iron range of existence. But no grace descended on her soul—no warm ray unlocked the ice of the well. Then, gradually becoming aware of the niggardly meannesses, of the harsh, uncharitable judgments, of the decorous frauds, that, with unconscious hypocrisy, her husband concealed beneath the robes of sanctity, a weary disgust stole over her; it stole, it deepened, it increased; —it became intolerable, when she discovered that Braddell had knowingly deceived her as to his worldly substance. In that mood into which she had rushed into these ominous nuptials, she had had no thought for vulgar advantages; had Braddell been a beggar, she had married him as rashly. But he, with the inability to comprehend a nature like hers—dim not more to her terrible vices than to the sinister grandeur which made their ordinary atmosphere—had descended cunningly to address the avarice he thought as potent in others as himself, to enlarge on the worldly prosperity with which Providence had blessed him; and now she saw that her dowry alone had saved the crippled trader from the bankrupt list. With this revolting discovery, with the scorn it produced, vanished all Lucretia's unstable visions of reform. She saw this man a saint amongst his tribe, and would not believe in the virtues of his brethren, great and unquestionable as they might have been proved

to a more dispassionate and humble inquirer. The imposture she detected, she deemed universal in the circle in which she dwelt; and Satan once more smiled upon the subject he regained.

Lucretia became a mother—but their child formed no endearing tie between the ill-assorted pair; it rather embittered their discord. Dimly, even then, as she bent over the cradle, that vision which now, in the old house at Brompton, haunted her dreams, and beckoned her over seas of blood into the fancied future—was foreshadowed in the face of her infant son. To be born again in that birth—to live only in that life—to aspire as man may aspire, in that future man whom she would train to knowledge and lead to power,—these were the feelings with which that sombre mother gazed upon her babe. The idea that the low-born, grovelling father had the sole right over that son's destiny, had the authority to cabin his mind in the walls of form, bind him down to the sordid apprenticeship, debased, not dignified, by the solemn mien, roused her indignant wrath,—she sickened when Braddell touched her child. All her pride of intellect, that had never slept—all her pride of birth, long dormant, woke up to protect the heir of her ambition, the descendent of her race, from the defilement of the father's nurture. Not long after her confinement, she formed a plan for escape—she disappeared from the house with her child. Taking refuge in a cottage, living on the sale of the few jewels she possessed, she was for some weeks almost happy. But Braddell, less grieved by the loss than shocked by the scandal, was indefatigable in his researches—he discovered her retreat.

The scene between them was terrible. There was no resisting the power which all civilized laws give to the rights of husband and father. Before this man, whom she scorned so unutterably, Lucretia was impotent. Then, all the boiling passions long suppressed beneath that command of temper, which she owed both to habitual simulation and intense disdain, rushed forth. Then, she appalled the impostor with her indignant denunciations of his hypocrisy, his meanness, and his guile. Then, throwing off the mask she had worn, she hurled her anathema on his sect, on his faith, with the same breath that smote his conscience and left it wordless. She shocked all the notions he sincerely entertained, and he stood awed by accusations from a blasphemer whom he dared not rebuke. His rage broke at length from his awe. Stung, maddened by the scorn of himself, his blood fired into juster indignation by her scoff at his creed, he lost all self-possession, and struck her to the ground. In the midst of shame and dread at disclosure of his violence, which succeeded the act so provoked, he was not less relieved than amazed when Lucretia, rising slowly, laid her hand gently on his arm, and said, "Repent not, it is past; fear not, I will be silent! Come, you are the stronger—you prevail. I will follow my child to your home."

In this unexpected submission in one so imperious, Braddell's imperfect comprehension of character saw but fear, and his stupidity exulted in his triumph. Lucretia returned with him. A few days afterwards, Braddell became ill; the illness increased,—slow, gradual, wearing. It broke his spirit with his health; and then the steadfast imperiousness of Lucretia's stern will ruled and subjugated him. He cowered beneath her haughty, searching gaze, he shivered at her sidelong, malignant glance; but with this fear came necessarily hate; and this hate, somethimes sufficing to vanquish the fear, spitefully evinced itself in thwarting her legitimate control over her infant. He would have it (though he had little real love for children) constantly with him, and affected to contradict all her own orders to the servants, in the sphere in which mothers arrogate most the right. Only on these occasions sometimes would Lucretia lose her grim self-control, and threaten that her child yet should be emancipated from his hands,—should yet be taught the scorn for hypocrites, which he had taught herself. These words sank deep not only in the resentment, but in the conscience of the husband. Meanwhile, Lucretia scrupled not to evince her disdain of Braddell, by markedly abstaining from all the ceremonies she had before so rigidly observed. The sect grew scandalized. Braddell did not abstain from making known his causes of complaint. The haughty, imperious woman was condemned in the community, and hated in the household.

It was at this time that Walter Ardworth, who was then striving to eke out his means by

political lectures (which at the earlier part of the century found ready audience) in our greats towns, came to Liverpool. Braddell and Ardworth had been schoolfellows, and even at school, embryo politicians of congenial notions; and the conversion of the former to one of the sects which had grown out of the old creeds, that, under Cromwell, had broken the sceptre of the son of Belial, and established the Commonwealth of Saints, had only strengthened the republican tenets of the sour fanatic. Ardworth called on Braddell, and was startled to find in his schoolfellow's wife, the niece of his benefactor, Sir Miles St. John. Now, Lucretia had never divulged her true parentage to her husband. In an union so much beneath her birth, she had desired to conceal from all her connections—the fall of the once-honored heiress. She had descended, in search of peace, to obscurity; but her pride revolted from the thought, that her low-born husband might boast of her connections, and parade her descent to his level. Fortunately, as she thought, she received Ardworth before he was admitted to her husband, who now, growing feebler and feebler, usually kept his room. She stooped to beseech Ardworth not to reveal her secret, and he, comprehending her pride, as a man well-born himself, and pitying her pain, readily gave his promise.

At the first interview, Braddell evinced no pleasure in the sight of his old schoolfellow. It was natural enough that one so precise should be somewhat revolted by one so careless of all form. But when Lucretia imprudently evinced satisfaction at his surly remarks on his visitor—when he perceived that it would please her that he should not cultivate the acquaintance offered him, he was moved by the spirit of contradiction, and the spiteful delight even in frivolous annoyance to conciliate and court the intimacy he had at first disdained; and then, by degrees, sympathy in political matters and old recollections of sportive, careless boyhood, cemented the intimacy into a more familiar bond than the sectarian had contracted really with any of his late associates.

Lucretia regarded this growing friendship with great uneasiness—the uneasiness increased to alarm, when one day, in the presence of Ardworth, Braddell, writhing with a sudden spasm, said—"I cannot account for these strange seizures—I think verily I am poisoned!"—and his dull eye rested on Lucretia's pallid brow. She was unusually thoughtful for some days after this remark, and one morning she informed her husband that she had received the intelligence that a relation, from whom she had pecuniary expectations, was dangerousiy ill, and requested his permission to visit this sick kinsman, who dwelt in a distant county. Braddell's eyes brightened at the thought of her absence; with little further questioning he consented; and Lucretia, sure perhaps that the barb was in the side of her victim, and reckoning, it may be, on greater freedom from suspicion if her husband died in her absence, left the house. It was, indeed, to the neighborhood of her kindred that she went. In a private conversation with Ardworth, when questioning him of his news of the present possessor of Laughton, he had informed her, that he had heard accidentally that Vernon's two sons (Percival was not then born) was sickly; and she went into Hampshire, secretly and unknown, to see what were really the chances that her son might yet become the lord of her lost inheritance.

During this absence, Braddell, now gloomily aware that his days were numbered, resolved to put into practice the idea long contemplated, and even less favored by his spite than justified by the genuine convictions of his conscience. Whatever his faults, sincere at least in his religious belief, he might well look with dread to the prospect of the training and education his son would receive from the hands of a mother who had blasphemed his sect, and openly proclaimed her infidelity. By will, it is true, he might create a trust, and appoint guardians to his child. But to have lived under the same roof with his wife—nay to have carried her back to that roof when she had left it, afforded tacit evidence that whatever the disagreement between them, her conduct could hardly have merited her exclusion from the privileges of a mother. The guardianship might therefore avail little to frustrate Lucretia's indirect contamination, if not her positive control. Beside, where guardians are appointed money must be left; and Braddell knew that at his death his assets would be found insufficient for his debts. Who would be guar-

dian to a penniless infant? He resolved, therefore, to send his child from his roof, to some place where, if reared humbly, it might at least be brought up in the right faith—some place which might defy the search and be beyond the perversion of the unbelieving mother. He looked round, and discovered no instrument for his purpose that seemed so ready as Walter Ardworth. For by this time he had thoroughly excited the pity and touched the heart of that good-natured, easy man.

His representations of the misconduct of Lucretia were the more implicitly believed by one who had always been secretly prepossessed against her—who, admitted to household intimacy, was an eye-witness to her hard indifference to her husband's sufferings—who saw in her very request not to betray her gentle birth, the shame she felt in her election—who regarded with indignation her unfeeling desertion of Braddell in his last moments, and who, besides all this, had some private misfortunes of his own, which made him the more ready listener to themes on the faults of women, and had already, by mutual confidences, opened the hearts of the two ancient school-fellows to each other's complaints and wrongs. The only other confidante in the refuge selected for the child, was a member of the same community as Braddell, who kindly undertook to search for a pious, godly woman, who, upon such pecuniary considerations as Braddell, by robbing his creditors, could afford to bestow, would permanently offer to the poor infant a mother's home and a mother's care. When this woman was found, Braddell confided his child to Ardworth, with such a sum as he could scrape together for its future maintenance. And to Ardworth, rather than to his fellow-sectarian, this double trust was given, because the latter feared scandal and misrepresentation, if he should be ostensibly mixed up in so equivocal a charge. Poor and embarrassed as Walter Ardworth was, Braddell did not for once misinterpret character when he placed the money in his hands, and this because the characters we have known in transparent boyhood we have known for ever. Ardworth was reckless, and his whole life had been wrecked -his whole nature materially degraded—by the want of common thrift and prudence. His own money slipped through his fingers, and left him surrounded by creditors, whom, rigidly speaking, he thus defrauded; but direct dishonesty was as wholly out of the chapter of his vices, as if he had been a man of the strictest principles and the steadiest honor.

The child was gone—the father died—Lucretia returned, as we have seen in Grabman's letter, to the house of death, to meet suspicion and cold looks, and menial accusations, and an inquest on the dead: but through all this the reft tigress mourned her stolen whelp. As soon as all evidence against her was proved legally groundless, and she had leave to depart, she searched blindly and franctically for her lost child; but in vain. The utter and penniless destitution in which she was left by her husband's decease, did not suffice to terminate her maddening chase. On foot she wandered from village to village, and begged her way, wherever a false clue misled her steps.

At last, in reluctant despair, she resigned the pursuit, and found herself one day in the midst of the streets of London, half-famished and in rags; and before her suddenly, now grown into vigorous youth—blooming, sleek, and seemingly prosperous—stood Gabriel Varney. By her voice, as she approached and spoke, he recognized his step-mother; and, after a short pause of hesitation, he led her to his home. It is not our purpose (for it is not necessary to those passages of their lives from which we have selected the thread of our tale) to follow these two, thus united, through their general career of spoliation and crime. Birds of prey, they searched in human follies and human errors for their food: sometimes severed, sometimes together, their interests remained one. Varney profited by the mightier and subtler genius of evil to which he had leashed himself; for, caring little for luxuries, and dead to the softer senses, she abandoned to him readily the larger share of their plunder. Under a variety of names and disguises, through a succession of frauds, some vast and some mean, but chiefly on the Continent, they had pursued their course, eluding all danger, and baffling all law.

Between three and four years before this period, Varney's uncle the painter, by one of those unexpected caprices of fortune which sometimes find heirs to a *millionaire* at the weaver's loom or the laborers plough, had suddenly, by the death of a very distant kinsman,

whom he had never seen, come into possession of a small estate, which he sold for 6000*l.* Retiring from his profession, he lived, as comfortably as his shattered constitution permitted, upon the interest of this sum; and he wrote to his nephew, then at Paris, to communicate the good news, and offer the hospitality of his hearth. Varney hastened to London. Shortly afterwards a nurse, recommended as an experienced, useful person in her profession, by Nicholas Grabman, who, in many a tortuous scheme, had been Gabriel's confederate, was installed in the poor painter's house. From that time his infirmities increased. He died, as his doctor said, "by abstaining from the stimulants to which his constitution had been so long accustomed;" and Gabriel Varney was summoned to the reading of the will. To his inconceivable disappointment, instead of bequeathing to his nephew the free disposal of his 6000*l.*, that sum was assigned to trustees for the benefit of Gabriel Varney and his children yet unborn: "An inducement," said the poor testator, tenderly, "for the boy to marry and reform!" So that the nephew could only enjoy the interest, and had no control over the capital. The interest of 6000*l.* invested in the Bank of England, was *flocci, nauci* to the vuluptuous spendthrift, Gabriel Varney!

Now, these trustees were selected from the painter's earlier and more respectable associates, who had dropped him, it is true, in his days of beggary and disrepute, but whom the fortune that made him respectable had again conciliated. One of these trustees had lately retired to pass the remainder of his days at Boulogne;—the other was a hypochondriacal valetudinarian. Neither of them, in short, a man of business. Gabriel was left to draw out the interest of the money, as it became periodically due, at the Bank of England. In a few months, the trustee settled at Boulogne died—the trust, of course lapsed to Mr. Stubmore, the valetudinarian survivor. Soon pinched by extravagance, and emboldened by the character and helpless state of the surviving trustee, Varney forged Mr. Stubmore's signature to an order on the Bank, to sell out such portion of the capital as his wants required. The impunity of one offence, begot courage for others, till the whole was well nigh expended. Upon these sums, Varney had lived very pleasantly, and he saw with a deep sigh the approaching failure of so facile a resource.

In one of the melancholy moods engendered by this reflection, Varney happened to be in the very town in France in which the Mainwarings, in their later years, had taken refuge, and from which Helen had been removed to the roof of Mr. Fielden. By accident he heard the name, and, his curiosity leading to further inquiries, learned that Helen was made an heiress by the will of her grandfather. With this knowledge came a thought of the most treacherous, the most miscreant and the vilest crime, that even *he* yet had perpetrated; so black was it, that for awhile, he absolutely struggled against it. But in guilt there seems ever a Necessity, that urges on step after step—to the last consummation. Varney received a letter to inform him that the last surviving trustee was no more, that the trust was, therefore, now centered in his son and heir, that that gentleman was at present very busy in settling his own affairs, and examining into a very mismanaged property in Devonshire, which had devolved upon him; but that he hoped in a few months to discharge more efficiently, than his father had done, the duties of trustee, and that some more profitable investment than the Bank of England would probably occur.

This new trustee was known personally to Varney—a contemporary of his own, and, in earlier youth, a pupil to his uncle. But, since then, he had made way in life, and retired from the Profession of Art. This young Stubmore, he knew to be a bustling, officious, man of business—somewhat greedy and covetous, but withal somewhat weak of purpose, good-natured in the main, and with a little lukewarm kindness for Gabriel, as a quondam fellow-pupil. That Stubmore would discover the fraud was evident—that he would declare it, for his own sake, was evident also—that the Bank would prosecute—that Varney would be convicted, was no less surely to be apprehended. There was only one chance left to the forger—if he could get into his hands, and in time, before Stubmore's bustling interference, a sum snfficient to replace what had been fraudently taken—he might easily manage, he thought, to prevent the forgery ever becoming known. Nay, if Stubmore, roused

into strict personal investigation, by the new Power of Attorney, which a new investment in the Bank would render necessary, should ascertain what had occurred, his liabilities being now indemnified, and the money replaced, Varney thought he could confidently rely on his *ci-devant* fellow-pupil's assent to wink at the forgery, and hush up the matter. But this was his only chance. How was the money to be gained? He thought of Helen's fortune, and the last scruple gave way to the imminence of his peril, and the urgency of his fears.

With this decision, he repaired to Lucretia, whose concurrence was necessary to his designs. Long habits of crime had now deepened still more the dark and stern color of that dread woman's sobre nature. But through all that had ground the humanity from her soul, one human sentiment, fearfully tainted and adulterated as it was, still struggled for life —the memory of the mother. It was by this, her least criminal emotion, that Varney led her to the worst of her crimes. He offered to sell out the remainder of the trust-money by a fresh act of forgery—to devote such proceeds to the search for her lost Vincent; he revived the hopes she had long since gloomily relinquished, till she began to conceive the discovery easy and certain. He then brought before her the prospect of that son's succession to Laughton—but two lives now between him and those broad lands—those two lives, associated with just cause of revenge!—*two* lives! Lucretia, till then, did not know that Susan had left a child—that a pledge of those nuptials, to which she imputed all her infamy, existed to revive a jealousy never extinguished, appeal to the hate that had grown out of her love. More readily than Varney had anticipated, and with fierce exultation, she fell into his horrible schemes.

Thus had she returned to England, and claimed the guardianship of her niece. Varney engaged a dull house in the suburb, and looking out for a servant, not likely to suspect and betray, found the nurse who had watched over his uncle's last illness; but Lucretia according to her invariable practice, rejected all menial accomplices—reposed no confidence in the tools of her black deeds. Feigning an infimity that would mock all suspicion of the hand that mixed the draught, and the step that stole to the slumber, she defied the justice of earth, and stood alone under the omniscience of heaven.

Various considerations had delayed the execution of the atrocious deed so coldly contemplated. Lucretia herself drew back; perhaps more daunted by conscience than she herself was distinctly aware,—and disguising her scruples in those yet fouler refinements of hoped revenge which her conversations with Varney have betrayed to the reader. The failure of the earlier researches for the lost Vincent, the suspended activity of Stubmore, left the more impatient murderer leisure to make the acquaintance of St. John, steal into the confidence of Helen, and render the Insurances on the life of the latter less open to suspicion than if effected immediately on her entrance into that shamble-house, and before she could be supposed to form that affection for her aunt which made probable so tender a fore-thought. These causes of delay now vanished, the Parcæ closed the abrupt woof, and lifted the impending shears.

Lucretia had long since dropped the name of Braddell. She shrank from proclaiming those second spousals, sullied by the degradation to which they had exposed her, and the suspicions implied on the inquest on her husband, until the hour for acknowledging her son should arrive. She resumed, therefore, the name of Dalibard, and by that we will continue to call her. Nor was Varney uninfluential in dissuading her from proclaiming her second marriage till occasion necessitated. If the son were discovered, and the proofs of his birth in the keeping of himself and his accomplice, his avarice naturally suggested the expediency of wringing from that son some pledge of adequate reward on succession to an inheritance which they alone could secure to him: out of this fancied fund, not only Grabman, but his employer, was to be paid. The concealment of the identity between Mrs. Braddell and Madame Dalibard might facilitate such an arrangement. This idea Varney locked as yet in his own breast. He did not dare to speak to Lucretia of the bargain he ultimately meditated with her son.

CHAPTER XIX.

Mr. Grabman's Adventures

THE lackeys in their dress-liveries stood at the porch of Laughton, as the postilions drove rapidly along the road, sweeping through venerable groves tinged with the hues of autumn, up to that stately pile. From the window of the large cumbrous vehicle, which Percival, mindful of Madame Dalibard's infirmity, had hired for her special accommodation, Lucretia looked keenly forth. On the slope of the hill grouped the deer, and below, where the lake gleamed, the swan rested on the wave. Farther on to the left, gaunt and stag-headed, rose, living still, from the depth of the glen, Guy's memorable oak. Coming now in sight, though at a distance, the gray church tower emerged from the surrounding masses of solemn foliage. Suddenly, the road curves round, and straight before her (the rooks cawing above the turrets, the sun reflected from the vanes) Lucretia gazes on the halls of Laughton. And didst thou not, O Guy's oak, murmur warning from thine oracular hollows? And thou who sleepest below the church tower, didst thou not turn, Miles St. John, in thy grave, when, with such tender care, the young Lord of Laughton bore that silent guest across his threshold, and with credulous, moistened eyes, welcomed Treason and Murther to his hearth?

There, at the porch, paused Helen gazing with the rapt eye of the poetess on the broad landscape, chequered by the vast shadows cast from the setting sun. There, too, by her side, lingered Varney, with an artist's eye for the stately scene, till a thought, not of art, changed the face of the earth, and the view without mirrored back the Golgotha of his soul.

Leave them thus—we must hurry on.

One day a traveller stopped his gig at a public house in a village in Lancashire. He chucked the rein to the ostler, and in reply to a question what oats should be given to the horse, said—"Hay and water—the beast is on job." Then sauntering to the bar, he called for a glass of raw brandy for himself; and while the host drew the spirit forth from the tap, he asked, carelessly, if, some years ago, a woman of the name of Joplin had not resided in the village.

"It is strange," said the host musingly.

"What is strange?"

"Why, we have just had a gent, asking the same question. I have only been here nine year come December, but my old ostler was born in the villiage, and never left it. So the gent had in the ostler, and he is now gone into the villiage to pick up what else he can learn."

This intelligence seemed to surprise and displease the traveller. "What the deuce," he muttered, "does Jason mistrust me? Has he set another dog on the scent? Humph!" He drained off his brandy, and sallied forth to confer with the ostler.

"Well, my friend," said Mr. Grabman, for the traveller was no other than that worthy—"well, so you remember Mrs. Joplin more than twenty years ago—eh?"

"Yees, I guess; more than twenty years since she left the *Pleck*." *

"Ah, she seems to have been a restless body—she had a child with her!"

"Yees, I moind that."

"And I dare say you heard her say the child was not her own, that she was paid well for it, eh?"

"Noa; my missus did not loike me to chaffer much with neighbor Joplin, for she was but a bad 'un—pretty fease, too. She lived agin the *wogh* † yonder, where you see that gent coming out."

"Oho! that is the gent who was asking after Mrs. Joplin?"

"Yees; and he give me half-a-croon!" said the clever ostler, holding out his hand.

Mr. Grabman, too thoughtful, too jealous of his rival, to take the hint at that moment, darted off, as fast as his thin legs could carry him, towards the unwelcome interferer in his own business.

Approaching the gentleman—a tall, powerful-looking young man—he somewhat softened his tone, and mechanically touched his hat as he said—

"What, sir, are you, too, in search of Mrs. Joplin?"

"Sir, I am," answered the young man, eyeing Grabman deliberately, "and you, I suppose, are the person I have found before me

* *Pleck*,—Lancashire and Yorkshire, synonym for *place*.

† *Anglice*,—wall.

on the same search—first, at Liverpool; next, at C——, about fifteen miles from that town; thirdly, at L——; and now we meet here. You have had the start of me. What have you learned?"

Mr. Grabman smiled: "Softly, sir, softly. May I first ask, (since open questioning seems the order of the day), whether I have the honor to address a brother practitioner—one of the law, sir—one of the law?"

"I am one of the law."

Mr. Grabman bowed and scowled.

"And may I make bold to ask the name of your client?"

"Certainly, you may ask. Every man has a right to ask what he pleases, in a civil way."

"But you'll not answer? Deep! Oh, I understand! Very good. But I am deep too, sir. You know Mr. Varney, I suppose?"

The gentleman looked surprised. His bushy brows met over his steady, sagacious eyes; but after a moment's pause, the expression of the face cleared up.

"It is as I thought," he said half to himself. "Who else could have had an interest in similar inquires?" "Sir," he added, with a quick and decided tone, "you are, doubtless, employed by Mr. Varney on behalf of Madame Dalibard, and in search of evidence connected with the loss of an unhappy infant. I am on the same quest, and for the same end. The interests of your client are mine. Two heads are better than one; let us unite our ingenuity and endeavors."

"And share the *pec*, I suppose?" said Grabman drily, buttoning up his pockets.

"Whatever fee you may expect, you will have, anyhow, whether I assist you or not. I expect no fee—for mine is a personal interest, which I serve gratuitously; but I can undertake to promise you, on my own part, more than the ordinary professional reward for your co-operation."

"Well, sir," said Grabman, mollified, "you speak very much like a gentleman. My feelings were hurt at first, I own. I am hasty, but I can listen to reason. Will you walk back with me to the house you have just left? and suppose we turn in and have a chop together, and compare notes."

"Willingly!" answered the tall stranger, and the two inquisitors amicably joined company. The result of their inquiries was not, however, very satisfactory. No one knew whither Mrs. Joplin had gone, though all agreed it was in company with a man of bad character and vagrant habits—all agreed, too, in the vague recollection of the child, and some remembered that it was dressed in clothes finer than would have been natural to an infant legally and filially appertaining to Mrs. Joplin. One old woman remembered, that on her reproaching Mrs. Joplin for some act of great cruelty to the poor babe, she replied that it was not her flesh and blood, and that if she had not expected more than she had got, she would never have undertaken the charge. On comparing the information gleaned at the previous places of their research, they found an entire agreement as to the character personally borne by Mrs. Joplin. At the village to which their inquiry had been first directed, she was known as a respectable, precise young woman, one of a small congregation of rigid dissenters. She had married a member of the sect, and borne him a child, which died two weeks after birth. She was then seen nursing another infant—though how she came by it, none knew. Shortly, after this, her husband, a journeyman carpenter of good repute, died; but to the surprise of the neighbors, Mrs. Joplin continued to live as comfortably as before, and seemed not to miss the wages of her husband; nay, she rather now, as if before kept back by the prudence of the deceased, launched into a less thrifty mode of life, and a gaiety of dress at variance both with the mourning her recent loss should have imposed, and the austere tenets of her sect.

This indecorum excited angry curiosity, and drew down stern remonstrance. Mrs. Joplin, in apparent disgust at this intermeddling with her affairs, withdrew from the village to a small town, about twenty miles distant, and there set up a shop. But her moral lapse became now confirmed; her life was notoriously abandoned, and her house the resort of all the reprobates of the place. Whether her means began to be exhausted, or the scandal she provoked attracted the notice of the magistrates, and imposed a check on her course, was not very certain, but she sold off her goods suddenly, and was next tracked to the village in which Mr. Grabman met his new coadjutor; and there, though her conduct was less fla-

grant and her expenses less reckless, she made but a very unfavorable impression, which was confirmed by her flight with an intinerant hawker of the lowest possible character. Seated over their port wine, the two gentlemen compared their experience, and consulted on the best mode of re-mending the broken thread of their research; when Mr. Grabman said, coolly, "But, after all, I think it most likely that we are not on the right scent. This bantling may not be the one we search for."

"Be not misled by that doubt. To arrive at the evidence we desire, we must still track this wretched woman."

"You are certain of that?"

"Certain."

"Hem! Did you ever hear of a Mr. Walter Ardworth?"

"Yes; what of him?"

"Why, he can best tell us where to look for the child."

"I am sure he would counsel as I do."

"You know him, then?"

"I do."

"What!—he lives still?"

"I hope so."

"Can you bring me across him?"

"If necessary."

"And that young man, who goes by his name, brought up by Mr. Fielden?——"

"Well, sir?"

"Is he not the son of Mr. Braddell?"

The stranger was silent, and, shading his face with his hand, seemed buried in thought. He then rose, took up his candle, and said quietly—

"Sir, I wish you good evening. I have letters to write in my own room. I will consider by to-morrow, if you stay till then, whether we can really aid each other farther, or whether we should pursue our researches separately." With these words, he closed the door: and Mr. Grabman remained baffled and bewildered.

However, he too had a letter to write; so, calling for pen, ink, and paper, and a pint of brandy, he indited his complaints and his news to Varney.

"Jason" (he began), "are you playing me false? Have you sent another man on the track with a view to bilk me of my promised fee?—Explain, or I throw up the business."

Herewith, Mr. Grabman gave a minute description of the stranger, and related pretty accurately what had passed between that gentlemen and himself. He then added the progress of his own inquiries, and renewed, as peremptorily as he dared, his demand for candor and plain dealing. Now, it so happened, that in stumbling up stairs to bed, Mr. Grabman passed the door in which his mysterious fellow-seeker was lodged, and, as is the usage in hostels, a pair of boots stood outside the door, to be cleaned betimes in the morning. Though somewhat drunk, Grabman still preserved the rays of his habitual astuteness. A clever, and a natural idea, shot across his brain, illuminating the fumes of the brandy; he stopped, and while one hand on the wall steadied his footing, with the other he fished up a boot, and peering within, saw legibly written—"Johh Ardworth, Esq., Gray's Inn." At that sight, he felt what a philosopher feels at the sudden elucidation of a troublesome problem. Down stairs again tottered Grabman, re-opened his letter, and wrote—

"P. S.—I have wronged you, Jason, by my suspicions; never mind—*Jubilate!* This interloper, who made me so jealous—who, think you, it is? Why, young Ardworth himself—that is, the lad who goes by such name. Now, is it not clear?—of course, no one else has such interest in learning his birth as the lost child himself—Here he is!—If old Ardworth lives (as he says), old Ardworth has set him to work on his own business. But then, that Fielden—rather a puzzler that! Yet, no;—now, I understand—old Ardworth gave the boy to Mrs. Joplin, and took it away from her again when he went to the parson's. Now, certainly, it might be quite necessary to prove—first, that the boy he took from Mr. Braddell's he gave to Mrs Joplin; secondly, that the boy he left with Mr. Fielden, was the same that he took again from that woman—therefore, the necessity of finding out Mother Joplin, an essential witness: Q. E. D., Master Jason!"

It was not till the sun had been some hours risen that Mr. Grabman imitated that luminary's example. When he did so, he found, somewhat to his chagrin, that John Ardworth had long been gone. In fact, whatever the motive that had led the latter on the search, he had succeeded in gleaning from Grabman all that that person could communicate, and their interview had inspired him with such disgust of the attorney, and so small an opinion of the value of his co-operation (in which last belief, perhaps, he was mistaken) that he had resolved to continue his inquiries alone, and had already, in his early morning's walk

through the village, ascertained that the man with whom Mrs. Joplin had quitted the place, had some time after been sentenced to six months imprisonment in the county jail. Possibly the prison authorities might know something to lead to his discovery; and through him the news of his paramour might be gained.

CHAPTER XX.

More of Mrs. Joplin.

ONE day at the hour of noon, the court boasting the tall residence of Mr. Grabman was startled from the quiet usually reigning there at broad daylight, by the appearance of two men, evidently no inhabitants of the place. The squalid, ill-favored denizens lounging before the doors, stared hard; and, at the fuller view of one of the men, most of them retreated hastily within. Then, in those houses, you might have heard a murmur of consternation and alarm. The ferret was in the burrow—a Bow-street officer in the court! The two men paused, looked round, and, stopping before the dingy tower-like house, selected the bell which appealed to the inmates of the ground-floor, to the left. At that summons Bill the cracksman imprudently presented a full view of his countenance through his barred window; he drew it back with astonishing celebrity; but not in time to escape the eye of the Bow-street runner.

"Open the door, Bill—there's nothing to fear—I have no summons against you, 'pon honor. You know I never deceive. Why should I? Open the door, I say!"

No answer.

The officer tapped with his cane at the foul window.

"Bill! there's a gentleman who comes to you for information, and he will pay for it handsomely."

Bill again appeared at the casement, and peeped forth, very cautiously, through the bars.

"Bless my vitals, Mr. R—— ! and it is you, is it? What were you saying about 'paying handsomely?'"

"That your evidence is wanted—not against a pal, man. It will hurt no one, and put at least five guineas in your pocket."

"Ten guineas!" said the Bow-street officer's companion.

"You be's a man of 'onor, Mr. R——!" said Bill, emphatically; "and I scorns to doubt you—so here goes."

With that, he withdrew from the window, and in another minute or so the door was opened, and Bill, with a superb bow, asked his visitors into his room.

In the interval, leisure had been given to the cracksman to remove all trace of the wonted educational employment of his hopeful children. The urchins were seated on the floor, playing at push-pin; and the Bow-street officer benignly patted a pair of curly heads as he passed them, drew a chair to the table, and, wiping his forehead, sat down, quite at home. Bill then deliberately seated himself, and, unbuttoning his waistcoat, permitted the butt-ends of a brace of pistols to be seen by his guests. Mr. R's companion seemed very unmoved by this significant action. He bent one inquiring steady look on the cracksman, which, as Bill afterwards said, went through him "like a gimblet through a panny," and, taking out a purse, through the network of which the sovereigns gleamed plesantly, placed it on the table, and said:

"This purse is yours, if you will tell me what has become of a woman named Joplin, with whom you left the village of ——, in Lancashire, in the year 18—."

"And," put in Mr. R——, "the gentleman wants to know, with no view of harming the woman. It will be to her own advantage to inform him where she is."

"'Pon honor, again?" said Bill.

"'Pon honor!"

"Well, then, I has a heart in my buzzom, and if so be I can do a good turn to the 'oman wot I has loved—and kep company with,—why not?"

"Why not, indeed?" said Mr. R——. "And as we want to learn, not only what has become of Mrs. Joplin, but what she did with the child she carried off from ——, begin at the beginning, and tell us all you know."

Bill mused.

"How much is there in the pus?"

"Eighteen sovereigns."

"Make it twenty—you nod—twenty then?

—a bargain! Now, I'll go on right a-head. You sees as how, some months arter we—that is, Peggy Joplin and self, left ——, I was put in quod in Lancaster jail—so I lost sight of the blowen. When I got out and came to Lunnon—it was a matter of seven year, afore, all of a sudding, I came bang agin her—at the corner of Common Garden. 'Why, Bill!' says she. 'Why Peggy!' says I—and we bussed each other like winky. 'Shall us come together agin?' says she. 'Why, no,' says I —'I has a wife wots a good un—and gets her bread by setting up as a widder with seven small children! By-the-bye, Peg, what's a come of your brat?'—for as you says, Sir, Peg had a child put out to her to nurse. Lor! how she cuffed it! 'The brat!' says she, laughing like mad—Oh, I god rid o' that, when you were in jail, Bill.' 'As how?' says I. 'Why there was a woman begging agin St. Voll's churchyard—so I purtended to see a a frind at a distance—'old the babby a moment,' says I, puffing and panting—'while I ketches my friend yonder.' So she 'olds the brat, and I never sees it agin;—and there's an ind of the bother!' 'But won't they ever ax for the child—them as giv' it you?' 'Oh no,' says Peg, 'they left it too long for that, and all the tin was a-gone; and one mouth is hard enough to feed in these days!—let by other folks' bantlings.' 'Well,' says I, 'where do you hang out? I'll pop in, in a friendly way.' So she tells me—som'are in Lambeth (I forgets hexackly)—and many's the good piece of work we ha' done togither."

"And where is she now?"—asked Mr. R——'s companion.

"I doesn't know purcisely, but I can com' at her: you see, when my poor wife died, four year com' Chris'mas, and left me with as fine a famuly, tho' I says it, as h-old King Georgy himself walked afore, with his gold 'eaded cane, on the terris at Vindsor—all heights and all h-ages, to the babby in arms (for the littel un there warn't above a year old, and had been a-brought up upon spoon-meat, with a dash o' blue-ruin to make him slim and ginteel); as for the bigger uns wot you don't see, they be doin' well in forin parts, Mr. R——!"

Mr. R—— smiled, significantly.

Bill resumed. "Where was I? Oh, when my wife died, I wanted some un to take care of the children, so I takes Peg into the 'ous. But Lor! how she larrupped 'em—she has a cruel heart—hasn't she Bob? Bob is a cute child, Mr. R——. Just as I was a-thinking of turning her out neck an' crop, a gemman what lodges aloft, wot be a laryer, and wot had just saved my nick, Mr. R——, by proving a h-alibi, said 'That's a tidy body, your Peg!' (for you see he was often a wisiting here, an' h-indeed, sin' thin, he has taken our third floor, No. 9) 'I've been a speakin' to her, and I find she has been a nus to the sick. I has a frind wots a h-uncle that's ill, can you spare her, Bill, to attind him?' 'That I can,' says I, 'anything to obleedge.' So Peg packs off —bag and baggidge."

"And what was the sick gentleman's name?" asked Mr. R.'s companion.

"It was one Mr. Warney—a painter, wot lived at Clap'am. Since thin I've lost sight of Peg; for we had 'igh words about the childern, —and she's a spiteful 'oman. But you can larn where she she be at Mr. Warney's—if so be he's still above-ground."

"And did this woman still go by the name of Joplin?"

Bill grinned, "She warn't such a spooney as that—that name was in your black books too much, Mr. R—— for a 'spectable nuss for sick bodies; no, she was then called Martha Skeggs, what was her own mother's name afore marridge. Any thing more, gemmen?"

"I am satisfied," said the younger visitor, rising; "there is the purse, and Mr. R—— will bring you ten sovereigns in addition. Good-day to you."

Bill, with superabundant bows and flourishes, showed his visitors out, and then, in high glee, he began to romp with his children; and the whole family circle was in a state of uproarious enjoyment, when the door flew open and in entered Grabman, his brief-bag in hand, dust-soiled, and unshaven.

"Aha, neighbor! your servant—your servant,—just come back!—always so merry—for the life of me, I could'nt help looking in! Dear me, Bill! why, you're in luck!" and Mr. Grabman pointed to a pile of sovereigns which Bill had emptied from the purse to count over, and weigh on the tip of his forefinger.

"Yes," said Bill, sweeping the gold into his corderoy pocket; "and who do you think brought me these shiners? Why, who but

old Peggy, the 'oman wot you put out at Clap'am."

"Well, never mind Peggy, now, Bill; I want to ask you what you have done with Margaret Joplin—whom, sly seducer that you are, you carried off from——"

"Why, man, Peggy be Joplin, and Joplin be Peggy!—and it's for that piece of noos that I got all them pretty new picters of his majesty, Bill—my namesake, God bliss 'im!"

"D——n," exclaimed Grabman, aghast—the young chap's spoiling my game again!" And seizing up his brief-bag, he darted out of the house, in the hope to arrive, at least, at Clapham before his competitors.

CHAPTER XXI.

Beck's Discovery.

UNDER the cedar trees, at Laughton, sate that accursed and adhorrent being, who sate there young, impassioned, hopeful, as Lucretia Clavering—under the old cedar trees, which, save that their vast branches cast an imperceptibly broader shadé over the mossy sward, the irrevocable winters had left the same. Where, through the nether boughs, the autumn sun-beams came aslant, the windows, enriched by many a haughty scutcheon, shone brightly against the western rays. From the flower-beds in the quaint garden near at hand, the fresh yet tranquil air wafted faint perfumes from the lingering heliotrope and fading rose. The peacock perched dozingly on the heavy balustrade; the blithe robin hopped busily along the sun-track on the lawn; in the distance the tinkling bells of the flock, the plaining low of some wandering heifer, while, breaking the silence, seemed still to blend with the repose. All images around lent themselves to complete that picture of stately calm, which is the character of those old mansion houses, which owner after owner has loved, and heeded,—leaving to them the graces of antiquity, guarding them from the desolation of decay.

Alone sate Lucretia, under the cedar trees, and her heart made dismal contrast to the noble tranquillity that breathed around. From whatever softening or repentant emotions which the scene of her youth might first have awakened—from whatever of less unholy anguish which memory might have caused, when she first, once more, sate under those remembered boughs, and, as a voice from a former world, some faint whisper of youthful love sighed across the waste and ashes of her devastated soul,—from all such rekindled humanities in the past she had now, with gloomy power, wrenched herself away. Crime, such as hers, admits not long the *sentiment* that softens the remorse of gentler error. If there wakes one moment from the past warning and melancholy ghost, soon from that abyss rises the Fury with the lifted scourge, and hunts on the frantic footsteps towards the future. In the future, the haggard intellect of crime must live; must involve itself mechanically in webs and meshes, and lose past and present in the welcome atmosphere of darkness.

Thus, while Lucretia sate, and her eyes rested upon the halls of her youth, her mind overleapt the gulf that yet yawned between her and the object on which she was bent. Already, in fancy, that home was hers again;—its present possessor swept away, the interloping race of Vernon, ending in one of those abrupt lines familiar to genealogists, which branch out busily from the main tree, as if all pith and sap were monopolized by them, continue for a single generation and then shrink into a printer's bracket, with the formal laconism, 'Died without issue.' Back, then, in the pedigree would turn the eye of some curious descendant, and see the race continue in the posterity of Lucretia Clavering.

With all her ineffable vices, mere cupidity had not, as we have often seen, been a main characteristic of this fearful woman; and in her design to endow, by the most determined guilt, her son with the heritage of her ancestors, she had hitherto looked but little to mere mercenary advantages for herself; but now, in the sight of that venerable and broad domain, a covetousness, absolute in itself, broke forth. Could she have gained it for her own use, rather than her son's, she would have felt a greater zest in her ruthless purpose. She looked upon the scene as a deposed monarch upon his usurped realm; it was her right. The early sense of possession in that inheritance returned to her. Reluctantly would she

even yield her claims to her child. Here, too, in this atmosphere she tasted once more what had long been lost to her—the luxury of that dignified respect which surrounds the well-born. Here, she ceased to be the suspected adventuress, the friendless outcast, the needy wrestler with hostile fortune, the skulking enemy of the law. She rose at once, and without effort, to her original state—the honored daughter of an illustrious house. The homeliest welcome that greeted her from some aged but unforgotten villager, the salutation of homage, the bated breath of humble reverence—even trifles like these were dear to her, and made her the more resolute to retain them. In her calm, relentless, onward vision, she saw herself enshrined in those halls, ruling in the delegated authority of her son, safe evermore from prying suspicion and degrading need, and miserable guilt for miserable objects. Here, but one great crime, and she resumed the majesty of her youth! While thus dwelling on the future, her eye did not even turn from those sunlit towers to the forms below, and more immediately inviting its survey.

On the very spot where, at the opening of this tale, sate Sir Miles St. John, sharing his attention between his dogs and his guest,—sate now Helen Mainwaring; against the balustrade, where had lounged Charles Vernon, leant Percival St. John; and in the same place where he had stationed himself that eventful evening, to distort, in his malignant sketch, the features of his father, Gabriel Varney, with almost the same smile of irony on his lips, was engaged in transferring to his canvas a more faithful likeness of the heirs's intended bride. Helen's countenance, indeed, exhibited comparatively but little of the ravages which the pernicious aliment, administered so noiselessly, made upon the frame. The girl's eye, it is true, had sunk, and there was a languid heaviness in its look; but the contour of the cheek was so naturally rounded, and the features so delicately fine, that the fall of the muscles was less evident; and the bright warm hue of the complexion, and the pearly sparkle of the teeth, still give a fallacious freshness to the aspect. But, as yet, the poisoners had forborne those ingredients which invade the springs of life, resorting only to such as undermine the health, and prepare the way to unsuspected graves. Out of the infernal variety of the materials at their command, they had selected a mixture which works by sustaining perpetual fever! which gives little pain, little suffering, beyond that of lassitude and thirst; which wastes like consumption, and yet puzzles the physician, by betraying few or none of its ordinary symptoms. But the disorder, as yet, was not incurable—its progress would gradually cease with the discontinuance of the venom.

Although October was far advanced, the day was as mild and warm as August. But Percival, who had been watching Helen's countenance, with the anxiety of love and fear, now proposed that the sitting should be adjourned. The sun was declining, and it was certainly no longer safe for Helen to be exposed to the air without exercise. He proposed that they should walk through the garden, and Helen, rising cheerfully, placed her hand on his arm. But she had scarcely descended the steps of the terrace when she stopped short, and breathed hard and painfully. The spasm was soon over, and, walking slowly on, they passed Lucretia with a brief word or two, and were soon out of sight amongst the cedars.

"Lean more on my arm, Helen," said Percival. "How strange it is, that the change of air has done so little for you, and our country doctor still less! I should feel miserable, indeed, if Simmons, whom my mother always considered very clever, did not assure me that there was no ground for alarm—that these symptoms were only nervous. Cheer up, Helen—sweet love, cheer up!"

Helen raised her face, and strove to smile, but the tears stood in her eyes: "It would be harder to die now, Percival!" she said falteringly.

"To die—oh, Helen! No; we must not stay here longer—the air is certainly too keen for you. Perhaps your aunt will go to Italy—why not all go there, and seek my mother? And she will nurse you, Helen,—and—and ——" He could not trust his voice farther.

Helen pressed his arm tenderly: "Forgive me, dear Percival—it is but at moments I feel so despondent—now, again, it is past. Ah, I so long to see your mother! when will you hear from her? Are you not too sanguine?—do you really feel sure she will consent to so lowly a choice?"

"Never doubt her affection—her apprecia-

tion of you," answered Percival, gladly and hoping that Helen's natural anxiety might be the latent cause of her dejected spirits: "often when talking of the future, under these very cedars, my mother has said—'You have no cause to marry for ambition—marry only for your happiness.' She never had a daughter—in return for all her love, I shall give her that blessing."

Thus talking, the lovers rambled on till the sun set, and then, returning to the house, they found that Varney and Madame Dalibard had preceded them. That evening Helen's spirits rose to their natural bouyancy. And Percival's heart was once more set at ease by her silvery laugh.

When, at their usual early hour, the rest of the family retired to sleep, Percival remained in the drawing-room to write again, and at length, to Lary Mary and Captain Greville. While thus engaged, his valet entered, to say, that Beck, who had been out since the early morning, in search of a horse that had strayed from one of the pastures, had just returned with the animal, who had wandered nearly as far as Southampton.

"I am glad to hear it," said Percival, abstractedly, and continuing his letter.

The valet still lingered—Percival looked up in surprise.

"If you please, sir, you said you particularly wished to see Beck, when he came back."

"I—oh, true! Tell him to wait. I will speak to him by and by—you need not sit up for me—let Beck attend to the bell."

The valet withdrew. Percival continued his letter, and filled page after page, and sheet after sheet; and when at length the letters, not containing a tithe of what he wished to convey, were brought to a close, he fell into a reverie that lasted till the candles burnt low, and the clock from the turret tolled one. Starting up in surprise at the lapse of time, Percival then for the first time, remembered Beck, and rung the bell.

The *ci-devant* sweeper, in his smart livery, appeared at the door.

"Beck, my poor fellow, I am ashamed to have kept you waiting so long; but I received a letter this morning which relates to you. Let me see, I left it in my study upstairs. Ah—you'll never find the way—follow me—I have some questions to put to you.'

"Nothin' agin my carakter, I hopes, your 'onor," said Beck, timidly.

"Oh, no!"

"Noos of the mattriss, then?" exclaimed Beck, joyfully.

"Nor that either," answered Percival, laughing, as he lighted the chamber candlestick, and followed by Beck, ascended the grand staircase to a small room which, as it adjoined his sleeping apartment, he had habitually used as his morning writing-room and study.

Percival had, indeed, received that day a letter which had occasioned him much surprise; it was from John Ardworth, and ran thus:—

"My dear Percival,—It seems that you have taken into your service a young man known only by the name of Beck. Is he now with you at Laughton? If so, pray retain him, and suffer him to be in readiness to come to me at a day's notice if wanted, though it is probable enough that I may rather come to you. At present, strange as it may seem to you, I am detained in London by business connected with that important personage. Will you ask him carelessly, as it were, in the meanwhile, the following questions:

"First: How did he become possessed of a certain child's coral, which he left at the house of one Becky Carruthers, in Cole's Buildings?

"Secondly: Is he aware of any mark on his arm—if so, will he describe it?

"Thirdly: How long has he known the said Becky Carruthers?

"Fourthly: Does he believe her to be honest, and truthful?

"Take a memorandum of his answers, and send it to me. I am pretty well aware of what they are likely to be; but I desire you to put the questions that I may judge if there be any discrepancy between his statement and that of Mrs. Carruthers. I have much to tell you, and am eager to receive your kind congratulations upon an event that has given me more happiness than the fugitive success of my little book. Tenderest regards to Helen; and, hoping soon to see you, ever affectionately yours.

"P.S.—Say not a word of the contents of this letter to Madame Dalibard, Helen, or to any one except Beck. Caution him to the same discretion. If you can't trust to his silence, send him to town."

When the post brought this letter, Beck was already gone on his errand, and after puzzling himself with vague conjectures, Percival's mind had been naturally too absorbed with his anxieties for Helen to recur much to the subject.

Now, refreshing his memory with the contents of the letter, he drew pen and ink before him, put the questions *seriatim*, noted down the answers as desired, and smiling at Beck's

frightened curiosity to know who could possibly care about such matters, and feeling confident (from that very fright) of his discretion, dismissed the groom to his repose.

Beck had never been in that part of the house before; and when he got into the corridor, he became bewildered, and knew not which turn to take—the right or the left. He had no candle with him; but the moon came clear through a high and wide skylight; the light, however, gave him no guide. While pausing, much perplexed, and not sure that he should even know again the door of the room he had just quitted, if venturing to apply to his young master for a clue through such a labyrinth, he was inexpressibly startled and appalled by a sudden apparition. A door at one end of the corridor opened noiselessly, and a figure, at first scarcely distinguishable, for it was robed from head to foot in a black, shapeless garb, scarcely giving even the outline of the human form, stole forth.

Beck rubbed his eyes, and crept, mechanically, close within the recess of one of the doors that communicated with the passage. The figure advanced a few steps towards him; and what words can describe his astonishment, when he beheld thus erect, and in full possession of physical power and motion, the palsied cripple whose chair he had often seen wheeled into the garden, and whose unhappy state was the common topic of comment in the servants' hall. Yes, the moon from above shone full upon that face which never, once seen, could be forgotten. And it seemed more than mortally stern and pale, contrasted with the sable of the strange garb, and beheld by that mournful light. Had a ghost, indeed, risen from the dead, it could scarcely have appalled him more. Madame Dalibard did not see the involuntary spy; for the recess in which he had crept, was on that side of the wall on which the moon's shadow was cast. With a quick step, she turned into another room, opposite that which she had quitted, the door of which stood ajar, and vanished noiselessly as she had appeared.

Taught suspicion by his early acquaintance with the "night-side" of human nature, Beck had good cause for it here—this detection of an imposture most familiar to his experience—that of a pretended cripple—the hour of the night—the evil expression on the face of the deceitful guest—Madame Dalibard's familiar intimacy and near connection with Varney—Varney the visitor to Grabman, who received no visitors but those who desire not to go to law, but to escape from its penalties—Varney, who had dared to brave the Resurrection Man in his den,—and who seemed so fearlessly at home in abodes where nought but poverty could protect the honest,—Varney now, with that strange woman, an inmate of a house in which the master was so young, so inexperienced—so liable to be duped by his own generous nature — all these ideas vaguely combined inspired Beck with as vague a terror; surely something, he knew not what, was about to be perpetrated against his benefactor—some scheme of villany which it was his duty to detect. He breathed hard—formed his resolves, and, stealing on tiptoe, followed the shadowy form of the poisoner through the half-opened doorway.

The shutters of the room of which he thus crossed the threshold—were not closed—the moon shone in, bright and still. He kept his body behind the door—peeping in—with straining fearful stare. He saw Madame Dalibard standing beside a bed, round which the curtains were closed—standing for a moment or so motionless, and as if in the act of listening, with one hand on a table beside the bed. He then saw her take from the folds of her dress something white and glittering, and pour from it, which appeared to him but a drop or two—cautiously, slowly—into a phial on the table, from which she withdrew the stopper: that done, she left the phial where she had found it—again paused a moment, and turned towards the door. Beck retreated hastily to his former hiding-place, and gained it in time. Again the shadowy form passed him and again the white face in the white moonlight froze his blood with its fell and horrible expression He remained cowering and shrinking against the wall for some time, striving to collect his wits, and considering what he should do. His first thought was to go at once and inform St. John of what he had witnessed. But the poor have a proverbial dread of deposing aught against a superior. Madame Dalibard would deny his tale—the guest would be believed against the menial—he should be but dismissed with ignominy.

At that idea, he left his hiding-place, and

crept along the corridor, in the hope of finding some passage at the end which might lead to the offices. But when he arrived at the other extremity, he was only met by great folding doors, which evidently communicated with the state apartments. He must retrace his steps —he did so—and when he came to the door which Madame Dalibard had entered, and which still stood ajar, he had recovered some courage, and with courage, curiosity seized him. For what purpose could the strange woman seek that room at night thus feloniously—what could she have poured and with such stealthy caution into the phial? Naturally and suddenly the idea of poison flashed across him. Tales of such crime (as indeed of all crime) had necessarily often thrilled the ear of the vagrant fellow-lodger with burglars and outlaws. But poison to whom? Could it be meant for his benefactor? Could St. John sleep in that room?—why not? The woman had sought the chamber before her young host had retired to rest, and mingled her potion with some medicinal draught. All fear vanished before the notion of danger to his employer. He stole at once through the doorway, and noiselessly approached the table on which yet lay the phial. His hand closed on it firmly. He resolved to carry it away, and consider next morning what next to do. At all events, it might contain some proof to back his tale and justify his suspicions. When he came once more into the corridor, he made a quick rush onwards, and luckily arrived at the staircase. There, the blood-red stains reflected on the stone-floors from the blazoned casements, daunted him little less than the sight at which his hair still bristled. He scarcely drew breath till he had got into his own little crib, in the wing set apart for the stablemen, when, at length, he fell into broken and agitated sleep. the visions of all that had successively disturbed him waking, united confusedly, as in one picture of gloom and terror. He thought that he was in his old loft in St. Giles's; that the Gravestealer was wrestling with Varney for his body, while he himself, lying powerless on his pallet, fancied he should be safe so long as he could retain, as a talisman, his child's coral, which he clasped to his heart. Suddenly, in that black shapeless garb in which he had beheld her Madame Dalibard bent over him, with her stern colorless face and wrenched from him his charm. Then ceasing his struggle with his horrible antagonist, Varney laughed aloud, and the Gravestealer seized him in his deadly arms.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Tapestry Chamber.

WHEN Beck woke the next morning, and gradually recalled all that had so startled and appalled him the previous night—the grateful creature felt less by the process of reason than by a brute instinct, that in the mysterious resuscitation and nocturnal wanderings of the pretended paralytic, some danger menaced his master—he became anxious to learn whether it was really St. John's room Madame Dalibard stealthily visited. A bright idea struck him—and in the course of the day, at an hour when the family were out of doors, he contrived to coax the good-natured valet, who had taken him under his special protection, to show him over the house. He had heard the other servant say there was such a power of fine things, that a peep into the room was as good as a show, and the valet felt pride in being *cicerone* even to Beck. After having stared sufficiently at the banquet-hall and the drawing-room, the armor, the busts, and the pictures, and listened, open-mouthed, to the guide's critical observations, Beck was led up the great stairs into the old family picture-gallery, and into Sir Miles's ancient room at the end, which had been left undisturbed, with the bed still in the angle; on returning thence, Beck found himself in the corridor which communicated with the principal bed-rooms, in which he had lost himself the night before.

"And vot room be that vith the littul vite 'ead h-over the door?" asked Beck, pointing to the chamber from which Madame Dalibard had emerged.

"That white head, Master Beck, is Floorer the goddess; but a heathen like you knows nothing about goddesses. Floorer has a half-moon in her hair, you see, which shows that the idolatrous Turks worship her, for the Turkish flag is a half moon, as I have seen at Constantinople! I have travelled, Beck."

"And vot room be it? Is it the master's?" persisted Beck.

"No, the pretty young lady, Miss Mainwaring, has it at present. There is nothing to see in it. But that one, opposite;" and the valet advanced to the door through which Madame Dalibard had disappeared—"*that* is curious; and as Madame is out, we may just take a peep." He opened the door gently, and Beck looked in. "This, which is called the turret-chamber, was Madame's when she was a girl, I have heard Old Bessy say; so master pops her there now. For my part, I'd rather sleep in your little crib, than have those great, gruff-looking figures staring at me by the firelight, and shaking their heads with every wind on a winter's night." And the valet took a pinch of snuff, as he drew Beck's attention to the faded tapestry on the walls. As they spoke, the draught between the door and the window caused the gloomy arras to wave with a life-like motion: and to those more superstitious than romantic, the chamber had certainly no inviting aspect.

"I never sees these old tapestry rooms," said the valet, "without thinking of the story of the lady who coming from a ball and taking off her jewels, happened to look up, and saw an eye in one of the figures which she felt sure was no peeper in worsted."

"Vot vos it, then?" asked Beck, timidly lifting up the hangings, and noticing that there was a considerable space between them and the wall, which was filled up in part by closets and wardrobes set into the wall, with intervals more than deep enough for the hiding-place of a man.

"Why," answered the valet, "it was a thief. He had come for the jewels; but the lady had the presence of mind to say aloud, as if to herself, that she had forgotten something, slipped out of the room, locked the door, called up the servants, and the thief—who was no less a person than the under-butler—was nabbed."

"And the French 'oman sleeps 'ere?" said Beck, musingly.

"French 'oman! Master Beck, nothing's so vulgar as these nick-names, in a first-rate sitivation. It is all very well when one lives with skinflints; but with such a master as our'n, respect's the go. Besides, Madame is not a French 'oman; she is one of the family—and as old a family it is, too, as e'er a lord's in the three kingdoms. But come, your curiosity is satisfied now, and you must trot back to your horses."

As Beck returned to the stables, his mind yet more misgave him as to the criminal designs of his master's visitor. It was from Helen's room that the false cripple had walked, and the ill-health of the poor young lady was a general subject of compassionate comment. But Madame Dalibard was Helen's relation—from what motive could she harbor an evil thought against her own niece? But still, if those drops were poured into the healing draught for good—why so secretly? Once more he revolved the idea of speaking to St. John—an accident dissuaded him from this intention; the only proof to back his tale was the mysterious phial he had carried away; but unluckily, forgetting that it was in his pocket—at a time when he flung off his coat to groom one of the horses, the bottle struck against the corn-bin and broke—all the contents were spilt. This incident made him suspend his intention, and wait till he could obtain some fresh evidence of evil intentions. The day passed without any other noticeable occurrence. The doctor called, found Helen somewhat better, and ascribed it to his medicine, especially to the effect of his tonic draught the first thing in the morning. Helen smiled—"Nay, doctor," said she, "this morning, at least, it was forgotten. I did not find it by my bedside. Don't tell my aunt, she would be so angry." The doctor looked rather discomposed.

"Well," said he, soon recovering his good humor, "since you are certainly better to-day without the draught, discontinue it also to-morrow. I will make an alteration for the day after——" So that night Madame Dalibard visited in vain her niece's chamber—Helen had a reprieve.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Shades on the Dial.

THE following morning was indeed eventful to the family at Laughton; and, as if conscious of what it brought forth, it rose dreary and sunless; one heavy mist covered all the landscape, and a raw drizzling rain fell pattering through the yellow leaves.

Made Dalibard, pleading her infirmities, rarely left her room before noon, and Varney professed himself very irregular in his hours of rising; the breakfast, therefore, afforded no social assembly to the family, but each took that meal in the solitude of his or her own chamber. Percival, in whom all habits partook of the healthfulness and simplicity of his character, rose habitually early; and that day, in spite of the weather, walked forth betimes to meet the person charged with the letters from the post. He had done so for the last three or four days, impatient to hear from his mother, and calculating that it was full time to receive the expected answer to his confession and his prayer. He met the messenger at the bottom of the park, not far from Guy's Oak. This day he was not disappointed. The letter-bag contained three letters for himself, two with the foreign post-mark—the third in Ardworth's hand. It contained also a letter for Madame Dalibard, and two for Varney.

Leaving the messenger to take these last to the hall, Percival, with his own prizes, plunged into the hollow of the glen before him, and, seating himself at the foot of Guy's Oak, through the vast branches of which the rain scarcely came, and only in single, mournful drops, he opened first the letter in his mother's hand, and read as follows:—

"My dear, dear Son,—How can I express to you the alarm your letter has given to me! So these, then, are the new relations you have discovered! I fondly imagined that you were alluding to some of my own family, and conjecturing who amongst my many cousins could have so captivated your attention. These the new relations! Lucretia Dalibard—Helen Mainwaring! Percival do you not know——' No, you cannot know—that Helen Mainwaring is the daughter of a disgraced man—of one who (more than suspected of fraud in the bank in which he was a partner) left his country, condemned even by his own father. If you doubt this, you have but to inquire at * * * *, not ten miles from Laughton, where the elder Mainwaring resided. Ask there, what became of William Mainwaring. And Lucretia,—you do not know that the dying prayer of her uncle, Sir Miles St. John, was that she might never enter the house he bequeathed to your father. Not till after my poor Charles's death did I know the exact cause for Sir Miles's displeasure, though confident it was just; but then amongst his papers I found the ungrateful letter which betrayed thoughts so dark, and passions so unwomanly, that I blushed for my sex to read it. Could it be possible that that poor old man's prayers were unheeded—that that treacherous step could ever cross your threshold—that that cruel eye which read with such barbarous joy the ravages of death on a benefactor's face, could rest on the hearth, by which your frank truthful countenance has so often smiled away my tears, I should feel indeed, as if a thunder-cloud hung over the roof.—No! if you marry the niece, the the aunt must be banished from your house.—Good Heavens! and it is the daughter of William Mainwaring, the niece and ward of Lucretia Dalibard, to whom you have given your faithful affection—whom you single from the world as your wife! Oh! my son—my beloved—my sole surviving child—do not think that I blame you, that my heart does not bleed while I write thus; but I implore you on my knees to pause at least,—to suspend this intercourse, till I myself can reach England. And what then? Why, then, Percival, I promise, on my part, that I will see your Helen with unprejudiced eyes—that I will put away from me, as far as possible, all visions of disappointed pride—the remembrance of faults not her own; and if she be, as you say and think, I will take her to my heart and call her 'Daughter.' Are you satisfied? If so, come to me—come at once, and take comfort from your mother's lips. How I long to be with you while you read this—how I tremble at the pain I so rudely give you! But my poor sister still chains me here, I dare not leave her, lest I should lose her last sigh. Come then, come, we will console each other.

"Your fond (how fond!) and sorrowing mother,

"MARY ST. JOHN.

"*October 3d*, 1831.

"Sorrento.

"P.S.—You see by this address that we have left Pisa for this place, recommended by our physician; hence an unhappy delay of some days in my reply. Ah, Percival, how sleepless will be my pillow till I hear from you!"

Long, very long, was it before St. John, mute and overwhelmed with the sudden shock of his anguish, opened his other letters—the first was from Captain Greville:

"What trap have you fallen into, foolish boy? That you would get into some silly scrape or another was natural enough. But a scrape for life, Sir—that is serious! But, God bless you for your candor, my Percival—you have written to us in time—you are old-fashioned enough to think that a mother's consent is necessary to a young man's union. And you have left it in our power to save you yet; it is not every boyish fancy that proves to be true love. But enough of this preaching; I shall do better than write scolding letters, I shall come and scold you in person. My servant is at this very moment packing my portmanteau, the *laquais-de-place* is gone to Naples for my passport. Almost as soon as you receive this I shall be with you; and if I am a day or two later than the mail, be patient; do not commit yourself further. Break your heart if you please, but don't implicate your honor. I shall come at once to Curzon-street. Adieu!

"H. GREVILLE."

Ardworth's letter was shorter than the others; fortunately so, for otherwise it had been unread:

"If I do not come to you myself the day after you receive this, dear Percival, which, indeed, is most probable, I shall send you my proxy in one whom, for

my sake, I know that you will kindly welcome. He will undertake my task, and clear up all the mysteries with which, I trust, my correspondence has thoroughly bewildered your lively imagination.

"Yours, ever,

"JOHN ARDWORTH.

"Gray's Inn."

Little, indeed, did Percival's imagination busy itself with the mysteries of Ardworth's correspondence. His mind scarcely took in the sense of the words, over which his eye mechanically wandered.

And the letter which narrated the visit of Madame Dalibard to the house thus solemnly interdicted to her step, was on its way to his mother; nay, by this time would almost have reached her. Greville was on the road; nay, as his tutor's letter had been forwarded from London—might, perhaps, be in Curzon-street that day. How desirable to see him before he could reach Laughton, to prepare him for Madame Dalibard's visit; for Helen's illness; explain the position in which he was involved, and conciliate the old soldier's rough kind heart to his love and his distress!

He did not dread the meeting with Greville; he yearned for it. He needed an adviser, a confidant, a friend. To dismiss abruptly his guests from his house—impossible! to abandon Helen because of her father's crime, or her aunt's fault, (whatever that last might be—and no clear detail of it was given) *that* never entered his thoughts! Pure and unsullied, the starry face of Helen shone the holier for the cloud around it. An inexpressible and chivalrous compassion mingled with his love and confirmed his faith. She, poor child, to suffer for the deeds of others! No. What availed his power as man, and dignity as gentleman, if they could not wrap in their own shelter the one by whom such shelter was now doubly needed? Thus, amidst all his emotions—firm and resolved, at least on one point—and beginning already to recover the hope of his sanguine nature, from his reliance on his mother's love, on the promises that softened her disclosures and warnings, and on his conviction that Helen had only to be seen for every scruple to give way, Percival wandered back towards the house, and, coming abruptly on the terrace, he encountered Varney, who was leaning motionless against the balustrades, with an open letter in his hand, Varney was deadly pale, and there was the trace of some recent and gloomy agitation in the relaxed muscles of his cheeks, usually so firmly rounded. But Percival did not heed his appearance as he took him gravely by the arm, and leading him into the garden, said, after a painful pause—

"Varney, I am about to ask you two questions, which your close connection with Madame Dalibard may enable you to answer; but in which, from obvious motives, I must demand the strictest confidence. You will not hint to her or to Helen what I am about to say?"

Varney stared uneasily on Percival's serious countenance, and gave the promise required.

"First, then, for what offence was Madame Dalibard expelled from her uncle's house—this house of Laughton?

"Secondly, what is the crime with which Mr. Mainwaring, Helen's father is charged?"

"With regard to the first," said Varney, recovering his composure, "I thought I had already told you that Sir Miles was a proud man, and that, in consequence of discovering a girlish flirtation between his niece Lucretia (now Madame Dalibard) and Mainwaring, who afterwards jilted her for Helen's mother, he altered his will—'expelled her his house,' is too harsh a phrase. This is all I know. With regard to the second question, no crime was ever brought home to William Mainwaring. He was suspected of dealing improperly with the funds of the bank, and he repaid the alleged deficit by the sacrifice of all he possessed."

"This is the truth!" exclaimed Percival, joyfully.

"The plain truth, I believe; but why these questions at this moment? Ah, you too, I see, have had letters—I understand! Lady Mary gives these reasons for withholding her consent."

"Her consent is not withheld," answered Percival; "but, shall I own it?—remember, I have your promise not to wound and offend Madame Dalibard by the disclosure: my mother does refer to the subjects I have alluded to, and Captain Greville, my old friend and tutor, is on his way to England—perhaps to-morrow he may arrive at Laughton."

"Ha!" said Varney, startled—"to-morrow.—and what sort of a man is this Captain Greville?"

"The best man possible for such a case as mine—kind-hearted, yet cool, sagacious, the finest observer, the quickest judge of character—nothing escapes him. Oh, one interview will suffice to show him all Helen's innocent and matchless excellence!"

"To-morrow! this man comes to-morrow!"

"All that I fear is—for he is rather rough and blunt in his manner,—all that I fear is, his first surprise—and, dare I say, displeasure, at seeing this poor Madame Dalibard, whose faults, I fear, were graver than you suppose, at the house from which her uncle—to whom, indeed, I owe this inheritance——"

"I see—I see!" interrupted Varney, quickly. "And Madame Dalibard, is the most susceptible of women—so well-born, and so poor, so gifted, and so helpless—it is natural. Can you not write, and put off this Captain Greville for a few days?—until, indeed, I can find some excuse for terminating our visit."

"But my letter may be hardly in time to reach him; he may be in town to-day."

"Go then to town at once; you can be back late at night, or at least to-morrow. Anything better than wounding the pride of a woman, on whom, after all, you must depend for free and open intercourse with Helen."

"That is exactly what I thought of; but what excuse?——"

"Excuse!—a thousand! Every man coming of age into such a property, has business with his lawyers; or why not say simply that you want to meet a friend of yours, who has just left your mother in Italy?—in short, any excuse suffices, and none can be offensive."

"I will order my carriage instantly."

"Right!" exclaimed Varney; and his eye followed the receding form of Percival with a mixture of fierce exultation and anxious fear. Then turning towards the window of the turret-chamber, in which Madame Dalibard reposed, and seeing it still closed, he muttered an impatient oath; but even while he did so, the shutters were slowly opened, and a footman, stepping from the porch, approached Varney with a message, that Madame Dalibard would see him in five minutes, if he would then have the goodness to ascend to her room.

Before that time was well expired, Varney was in the chamber. Madame Dalibard was up, and in her chair: and the unwonted joy which her countenance evinced, was in strong contrast with the sombre shade upon his son-in-law's brow, and the nervous quiver of his lip."

"Gabriel," she said, as he drew near to her, "my son is found!"

"I know it," he answered petulantly.

"You!—from whom?"

"From Grabman."

"And I from a still better authority—from Walter Ardworth himself! He lives; he will restore my child!" She extended a letter while she spoke. He in return, gave her, not that still crumpled in his hand, but one which he drew from his breast. These letters severally occupied both, begun and finished almost in the same moment.

That from Grabman ran that:—

"Dear Jason,—Toss up your hat, and cry hip-hip! At last, from person to person, I have tracked the lost Vincent Braddell. He lives still! We can maintain his identity in any court of law. Scarce in time for the post, I have not a moment for further particulars. I shall employ the next two days in reducing all the evidence to a regular digest, which I will despatch to you. Meanwhile, prepare, as soon as may be, to put me in possession of my fee,—£5,000, and my expedition merits something more. Yours,

"NICHOLAS GRABMAN."

The letter from Ardworth was no less positive:

"Madam,—In obedience to the commands of a dying friend, I took charge of his infant, and concealed its existence from his mother—yourself. On returning to England, I need not say that I was not unmindful of my trust. Your son lives; and after mature reflection, I have resolved to restore him to your arms. In this I have been decided by what I have heard from one whom I can trust, of your altered habits, your decorous life, your melancholy infirmities, and the generous protection you have given to the orphan of my poor cousin Susan, my old friend Mainwaring. Alfred Braddell himself, if it be permitted to him to look down and read my motives, will pardon me, I venture to feel assured, this departure from his injunctions. Whatever the faults which displeased him, they have been amply chastised. And your son, grown to man, can no longer be endangered by example, in tending the couch, or soothing the repentance, of his mother.

"These words are severe; but you will pardon them in him who gives you back your child. I shall venture to wait on you in person, with such proofs as may satisfy you as to the identity of your son. I count on arriving at Laughton to-morrow. Meanwhile, I simply sign myself by a name, in which you will recognize the kinsman to one branch of your family, and the friend of your dead husband,

"J. WALTER ARDWORTH.

"Craven Hotel, *October*, 1831."

"Well! and you are not rejoiced!' said Lucretia, gazing surprised on Varney's sullen and unsympathizing face.

"No! because time presses; because, even while discovering your son, you may fail in securing his heritage; because, in the midst of your triumph, I see Newgate opening to myself! Look you, I, too, have had my news—less pleasing than yours. This Stubmore (curse him!) writes me word, that he shall certainly be in town next month at farthest, and that he meditates, immediately on his arrival, transferring the legacy from the Bank of England to an excellent mortgage of which he has heard. Were it not for this scheme of ours, nothing would be left for me but flight and exile."

"A month!—that is a long time. Do you think, now that my son is found, and that son one like John Ardworth, (for there can be no doubt that my surmise was right), with genius to make station the pedestal to the power I dreamed of in my youth, but which my sex forbade me to attain—do you think I will keep him a month from his inheritance? Before the month is out, you shall replace what you have taken, and buy your trustee's silence, if need be—either from the sums you have insured, or from the rents of Laughton."

"Lucretia!" said Varney, whose fresh colors had grown livid—"what is to be done must be done at once! Percival St. John has heard from his mother. Attend!" And Varney rapidly related the questions St. John had put to him, the dreaded arrival of Captain Greville, the danger of so keen an observer—the necessity, at all events, of abridging their visit—the urgency of hastening the catastrophe to its close.

Lucretia listened in ominous and steadfast silence.

"But," she said, at last, "you have persuaded St. John to give this man the meeting in London—to put off his visit for the time! St. John will return to us to-morrow. Well; and if he finds his Helen is no more! Two nights ago I, for the first time, mingled in the morning draught that which has no antidote and no cure. This night two drops more, and St. John will return to find that Death is in the house before him. And then for himself—the sole remaining barrier between my son and this inheritance, for himself—why grief sometimes kills suddenly; and there be drugs whose effect simulates the death-stroke of grief."

"Yet, yet, this rapidity, if necessary, is perilous. Nothing in Helen's state forebodes *sudden* death by natural means. The strangeness of two deaths—both so young—Greville in England, if not here—hastening down to examine, to inquire, with such prepossessions against you:—there must be an inquest!"

"Well, and what can be discovered? It was I who shrunk before—it is I who now urge dispatch. I feel as in my proper home in these halls. I would not leave them again but to my grave! I stand on the hearth of my youth. I fight for my rights and my son's. Perish those who oppose me!"

A fell energy and power were in the aspect of the murderess as she thus spoke; and while her determination awed the inferior villainy of Varney, it served somewhat to mitigate his fears.

As in more detail they began to arrange their execrable plans, Percival, while the horses were being harnessed to take him to the nearest post-town, sought Helen, and found her in the little chamber which he had described and appropriated as her own, when his fond fancy had sketched the fair outline of the future.

This room had been orginally fitted up for the private devotions of the Roman-catholic wife of an ancestor, in the reign of Charles II.; and in a recess, half veiled by a curtain, there still stood that holy symbol, which, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, no one sincerely penetrated with the solemn pathos of sacred history can behold unmoved—the Cross of the Divine Agony. Before this holy symbol, Helen stood in earnest reverence. She did not kneel (for the forms of the religion in which she had been reared were opposed to that posture of worship before the graven image), but you could see in that countenance, eloquent at once with the enthusiasm and the meekness of piety, that the soul was filled with the memories and the hopes, which, age after age, have consoled the sufferer, and inspired the martyr. The soul knelt to the idea, if the knee bowed not to the image, embracing the tender grandeur of the sacrifice, and the vast inheritance opened to faith in the redemption.

The young man held his breath while he gazed. He was moved, and he was awed. Slowly Helen turned towards him, and, smiling sweetly, held out to him her hand. They seated themselves in silence in the depth of the overhanging casement; and the mournful character of the scene without, where, dimly through the misty rains, gloomed the dark foliage of the cedars, made them insensibly draw closer to each other, in the instinct of love when the world frowns around it. Percival wanted the courage to say that he had come to take farewell, though but for a day, and Helen spoke first.

"I cannot guess why it is, Percival, but I am startled at the change I feel in myself—no, not in health, dear Percival, I mean in mind,—during the last few months;—since, indeed, we have known each other. I remember so well the morning in which my aunt's letter arrived at the dear vicarage. We were returning from the village fair, and my good guardian was smiling at my notions of the world. I was then so giddy, and light, and thoughtless—everything presented itself to me in such gay colors,—I scarcely believed in sorrow. And now I feel as if I were awakened to a truer sense of a nature—of the ends of our being here; I seem to know that life is a grave and solemn thing. Yet I am not less happy, Percival. No, I think, rather, that I knew not true happiness till I knew you. I have read somewhere that the slave is gay in his holiday from toil; if you free him, if you educate him, the gaiety vanishes, and he cares no more for the dance under the palm-tree. But is he less happy? So it is with me!"

"My sweet Helen, I would rather have one gay smile of old—the arch, careless laugh which came so naturally from those rosy lips, than hear you talk of happiness with that quiver in your voice—those tears in your eyes."

"Yet gaiety," said Helen, thoughtfully, and in the strain of her pure, truthful poetry of soul, "is only the light impression of the present moment—the play of the mere spirits; and happiness seems a forethought of the future, spreading on, far and broad, over all time and space."

"And you live, then, in the future, at last—you have no misgivings now, my Helen? Well, that comforts me! Say it, Helen,—say the future will be ours!"

"It will—it will—for ever and for ever," said Helen, earnestly, and her eyes involuntarily rested on the Cross.

In his younger spirit and less imaginative nature, Percival did not comprehend the depth of sadness implied in Helen's answer; taking it literally, he felt as if a load were lifted from his heart, and kissing with rapture the hand he held, he exclaimed—"Yes, this shall soon—oh, soon be mine! I fear nothing while you hope. You cannot guess how those words have cheered me, for I am leaving you, though but for a few hours, and I shall repeat those words—they will ring in my ears, in my heart, till we meet again."

"Leaving me!" said Helen, turning pale, and her clasp on his hand tightened. Poor child, she felt mysteriously a sentiment of protection in his presence.

"But at most for a day. My old tutor, of whom we have so often conversed, is on his way to England—perhaps, even now in London. He has some wrong impressions against your aunt—his manner is blunt and rough. It is necessary that I should see him before he comes hither—you know how susceptible is your aunt's pride—just to prepare him for meeting her,—you understand?"

"What impressions against my aunt? Does he even know her?" asked Helen; and if such a sentiment as suspicion could cross that candid innocence of mind—that sentiment towards this stern relation whose arms had never embraced her—whose lips had never spoken of the past—whose history was as sealed volume, disturbed and disquieted her.

"It is because he has never known her that he does her wrong. Some old story of her indiscretion as a girl—of her uncle's displeasure—what matters now?" said Percival, shrinking sensitively from one disclosure that might wound Helen in her kinswoman. "Meanwhile, dearest, you will be prudent—you will avoid this damp air, and keep quietly at home, and amuse yourself, sweet fancier of the future, in planning how to improve these old halls, when they and their unworthy master are your own. God bless you!—God guard you, Helen!"

He rose, and with that loyal chivalry of love which felt respect the more for the careless guardianship to which his Helen was entrusted, he refrained from that parting kiss

which their pure courtship warranted,—for which his lip yearned. But as he lingered, an irresistible impulse moved Helen's heart. Mechanically she opened her arms, and her head sunk upon his shoulder. In that embrace, they remained some moments silent, and an angel might unreprovingly have heard their hearts beat through the stillness.

At length, Percival tore himself from those arms which relaxed their imploring hold reluctantly:—she heard his hurried step descend the stairs, and, in a moment more, the roll of the wheels in the court without:—a dreary sense as of some utter desertion, some everlasting bereavement, chilled and appalled her. She stood motionless, as if turned to stone, on the floor; suddenly the touch of something warm on her hand—a plaining whine, awoke her attention;—Percival's favorite dog missed his master, and had slunk for refuge to her. The dread sentiment of loneliness vanished in that humble companionship; and seating herself on the ground, she took the dog in her arms, and bending over it, wept in silence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Murder, towards his Design, moves like a Ghost.

THE reader will, doubtless have observed the consummate art with which the poisoner had hitherto advanced upon her prey. The design conceived from afar, and executed with elaborate stealth, defied every chance of detection, against which the ingenuity of practised villany could guard. Grant even that the deadly drugs should betray the nature of the death they inflicted and by some unconjectured secret, in the science of chemistry, the presence of those vegetable compounds which had hitherto baffled every known and positive test, in the posthumous examination of the most experienced surgeons, should be clearly ascertained, not one suspicion seemed likely to fall upon the ministrant of death. The medicines were never brought to Madame Dalibard, were never given by her hand; nothing ever tasted by the victim could be tracked to her aunt. The helpless condition of the cripple, which Lucretia had assumed, forbade all notion even of her power of movement. Only in the dead of night, when, as she believed, every human eye that could watch her was sealed in sleep, and then in those dark habiliments, which, (even, as might sometimes happen, if the victim herself were awake), a chance ray of light struggling through chink or shutter could scarcely distinguish from the general gloom,—did she steal to the chamber, and infuse the colorless and tasteless liquid* in the morning draught, meant to bring strength and healing. Grant that the draught was untouched—that it was examined by the surgeon—that the fell admixture could be detected—suspicion would wander anywhere rather than to that crippled and helpless kinswoman, who could not rise from her bed without aid.

But now this patience was to be abandoned, the folds of the serpent were to coil in one fell clasp upon its prey.

Fiend as Lucretia had become, and hardened as were all her resolves by the discovery of her son, and her impatience to endow him with her forfeited inheritance, she yet shrank from the face of Helen that day; on the excuse of illness, she kept her room, and admitted only Varney, who stole in from time to time, with creeping step and haggard countenance, to sustain her courage or his own. And every time he entered, he found Lucretia sitting with Walter Ardworth's open letter in her hand, and turning with a preternatural excitement, that seemed almost like aberration of mind, from the grim and horrid topic which he invited, to thoughts of wealth, and power, and triumph, and exulting prophecies of the fame her son should achieve; he looked but on the blackness of the gulf, and shuddered; her vision overleapt it, and smiled on the misty palaces her fancy built beyond.

Late in the evening, before she retired to rest, Helen knocked gently at her aunt's door,—a voice quick and startled, bade her enter; she came in, with her sweet caressing look, and took Lucretia's hand, which struggled from the clasp. Bending over that haggard brow, she said, simply, yet to Lucretia's ear the voice seemed that of command: "Let me kiss you, this night!" and her lips pressed that brow. The murderess shuddered, and closed her eyes; when she opened them, the angel visitor was gone.

* The celebrated *aqua di Tufania* (Tufania water) was wholly without taste or color.

Night deepened and deepened into those hours from the first of which we number the morn, though night still is at her full. Moon-beam and star-beam came through the casements, shyly, and fairy-like, as on that night, when the murderess was young and crimeless —in deed, if not in thought—that night, when in the book of Leechcraft, she meted out the hours, in which the life of her benefactor might still interpose between her passion and its end. Along the stairs, through the hall, marched the armies of light—noiseless, and still and clear, as the judgments of God, amidst the darkness and shadow of mortal destinies. In one chamber alone, the folds, curtained close, forbade all but a single ray—that ray came direct, as the stream from a lantern, as the beam reflected back from an eye:—as an eye it seemed watchful, and steadfast, through the dark; it shot along the floor—it fell at the foot of the bed.

Suddenly, in the exceeding hush, there was a strange and ghastly sound—it was the howl of a dog! Helen started from her sleep. Percival's dog had followed her, into her room, it had coiled itself, grateful for the kindness, at the foot of the bed. Now, it was on the pillow, she felt its heart beat against her hand; it was trembling; its hairs bristled up, and the howl changed into a shrill bark of terror and wrath. Alarmed, she looked round: quickly between her and that ray from the crevice, a shapeless Darkness passed, and was gone! So undistinguishable, so without outline, that it had no likeness of any living form;—like a cloud, like a thought, like an omen, it came in gloom, and it vanished.

Helen was seized with a superstitious terror —the dog continued to tremble and growl low. All once more was still—the dog sighed itself to rest. The stillness, the solitude—the glimmer of the moon—all contributed yet more to appal the enfeebled nerves of the listening shrinking girl. At length she buried her face under the clothes, and towards daybreak fell into a broken feverish sleep, haunted with threatening dreams.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Messenger speeds.

TOWARDS the afternooon of the following day, an elderly gentleman was seated in the coffee-room of an hotel at Southampton, engaged in writing a letter, while the waiter in attendance was employed on the wires that fettered the petulent spirit contained in a bottle of Schweppe's soda water. There was something in the aspect of the old gentleman, and in the very tone of his voice, that inspired respect, and the waiter had cleared the other tables of their latest newspapers to place before him. He had only just arrived by the packet from Havre, and even the newspapers had not been to him that primary attraction they generally constitute to the Englishman returning to his bustling native land, which, somewhat to his surprise, has contrived to go on tolerably well during his absence.

We use our privilege of looking over his shoulder while he writes:—

" Here I am, then, dear Lady Mary, at Southampton, and within an easy drive of the old Hall! A file of Galignani's Journals, which I found on the road between Marseilles and Paris, informed me, under the head of 'fashionable movements,' that 'Percival St. John, Esq., was gone to his seat at Laughton.' According to my customary tactics of marching at once to the seat of action, I therefore made direct for Havre, instead of crossing from Calais; and I suppose I shall find our young gentlemau engaged in the slaughter of hares and partridges. You see, it is a good sign that he can leave London. Keep up your spirits, my dear friend. If Perce has been really duped and taken in,—as all you mothers are so apt to fancy,—rely upon an old soldier to defeat the enemy, and expose the *rust*. But if, after all, the girl is such as he describes and believes—innocent, artless, and worthy his affection—oh, then I range myself, with your own good heart, upon his side. Never will I run the risk of unsettling a man's whole character for life by wantonly interfering with his affections. But there we are agreed.

" In a few hours I shall be with our dear boy, and his whole heart will come out clear and candid as when it beat under his midshipman's true blue. In a day or two, I shall make him take me to town, to introduce me to the whole nest of them. Then I shall report progress. Adieu, till then! Kind regards to your poor sister. I think we shall have a mild winter. Not one warning twinge, as yet, of the old rheumatism.

" Ever your devoted old friend
" and *preux chevalier*,
" H. GREVILLE."

The captain had completed his letter, sipped his soda water, and was affixing to his communication his seal, when he heard the rattle

of a post-chaise without. Fancying it was the one he had ordered, he went to the open window which looked on the street: but the chaise contained travellers, only halting to change horses. Somewhat to his surprise, and a little to his chagrin,—for the captain did not count on finding company at the Hall,—he heard one of the travellers in the chaise ask the distance to Laughton. The countenance of the questioner was not familiar to him. But, leaving the worthy captain to question the landlord, without any satisfactory information, and to hasten the chaise for himself, we accompany the travellers on their way to Laughton. They were but two—the proper complement of a post-chaise—and they were both of the ruder sex. The elder of the two was a man of middle age, but whom the wear and tear of active life had evidently advanced towards the state called *elderly*. But there was still abundant life in his quick, dark eye; and that mercurial youthfulness of character, which in some happy constitutions, seems to defy years and sorrows, evinced itself in a rapid play of countenance, and as much gesticulation as the narrow confines of the vehicle, and the position of a traveller, will permit. The younger man, far more grave in aspect and quiet in manner, leaned back in the corner with folded arms, and listened with respectful attention to his companion.

"Certainly, Dr. Johnson is right—great happiness in an English post chaise properly driven!—more exhilarating than a palanquin: '*Post equitem sedet atra cura*'—true only of such scrubby hacks as old Horace could have known. Black Care does not sit behind English posters—eh, my boy!" As he spoke this, the gentleman had twice let down the glass of the vehicle, and twice put it up again.

"Yet," he resumed, without noticing the brief, good-humored reply of his companion—"yet this is an anxious business enough that we are about. I don't feel quite easy in my conscience. Poor Braddell's injunctions were very strict, and I disobey them. It is on your responsibility, John!"

"I take it without hesitation. All the motives for so stern a severance must have ceased, and is it not a sufficient punishment to find in that hoped-for son, a ——"

"Poor woman!" interrupted the elder gentleman, in whom we begin to recognize the *soi-disant* Mr. Tomkins—"true, indeed—too true. How well I remember the impression Lucretia Clavering first produced on me;—and to think of her now as a miserable cripple! By Jove, you are right, sir! Drive on post-boy, quick, quick!"

There was a short silence.

The elder gentleman, abruptly, put his hand upon his companion's arm.

"What consummate acuteness—what patient research you have shown! What could I have done in this business without you? How often had that garrulous Mrs. Mivers bored me with Becky Carruthers. and the coral, and St. Paul's, and not a suspicion came across me;—a word was sufficient for you;—and then to track this unfeeling old Joplin, from place to place, till you find her absolutely a servant under the very roof of Mrs Braddell herself! Wonderful! Ah, boy, you will be an honor to the law, and to your country. And, what a hard-hearted rascal you must think me, to have deserted you so long!"

"My dear Father," said John Ardworth, tenderly—"your love now recompenses me for all. And ought I not rather to rejoice not to have known the tale of a mother's shame, until I could half forget it on a father's breast?"

"John," said the elder Ardworth, with a choking voice—"I ought to wear sackcloth all my life, for having given you such a mother. When I think what I have suffered from the habit of carelessness in those confounded money matters (—'*irritamenta malorum*,' indeed!) I have only one consolation, that my patient, noble son, is free from my vice. You would not believe what a well-principled, honorable fellow I was at your age, and yet, how truly I said to my poor friend, William Mainwaring, one day at Laughton (I remember it now)—'Trust me with any thing else but half-a-guinea!' Why, sir, it was that fault that threw me into low company—that brought me in contact with my innkeeper's daughter at Limerick. I fell in love, and I married (for, with all my faults, I was never a seducer, John). I did not own my marriage; why should I? my relatives had cut me already. You were born, and hunted poor devil as I was, I forgot all by your cradle. Then, in the midst of my troubles, that ungrateful woman deserted me—then, I was led to believe that it

was not my own son whom I had kissed and blessed. Ah, but for that thought should I have left you as I did! And even in infancy, you had the features only of your mother. Then, when the death of the adulteress set me free, and years afterward, in India, I married again and had new ties—my heart grew still harder to you. I excused myself by knowing that at least you were cared for, and trained to good by a better guide than I. But when, by so strange a hazard, the very priest who had confessed your mother on her death-bed (she was a Catholic), came to India, and (for he had known me at Limerick) recognized my altered person, and obeying his penitent's last injunctions, assured me that you were my son,—oh, John, then, believe me, I hastened back to England, on the wings of remorse! Love you, boy! I have left at Madras, three children, young and fair, by a woman now in heaven, who never wronged me and, by my soul, John Ardworth, you are dearer to me than all!"

The father's head drooped on his son's breast as he spoke; then, dashing away his tears, he resumed:

"Ah, why would not Braddell permit me, as I proposed, to find for his son the same guardianship as that to which I entrusted my own; but his bigotry besotted him;—a clergyman of the high church,—that was worse than an atheist! I had no choice left to me but the roof of that she-hypocrite. Yet I ought to have come to England when I heard of the child's loss, braved duns and all; but I was money-making, money-making — retribution for money-wasting;—and—well, it's no use repenting!—and—and—there is the lodge, the park, the old tree! Poor Sir Miles!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Spy flies.

MEANWHILE at Laughton, there was confusion and alarm. Helen had found herself more than usually unwell in the morning; towards noon, the maid, who attended her, informed Madame Dalibard that she was afraid the poor young lady had much fever, and inquired if the doctor should be sent for. Madame Dalibard seemed surprised at the intelligence, and directed her chair to be wheeled into her niece's room, in order herself to judge of Helen's state. The maid, sure that the doctor would be summoned, hastened to the stables and seeing Beck, instructed him to saddle one of the horses, and to await further orders. Beck kept her a few moments talking, while he saddled his horse, and then followed her into the house, observing that it would save time if he were close at hand.

"That is quite true," said the maid, "and you may as well wait in the corridor. Madame may wish to speak to you herself, and give you her own message or note to the Doctor."

Beck, full of gloomy suspicions, gladly obeyed; and while the maid entered the sick chamber, stood anxiously without. Presently Varney passed him, and knocked at Helen's door; the maid half opened it.

"How is Miss Mainwaring?" said he eagerly.

"I fear she is worse, sir,—but Madame Dalibard does not not think there is any danger."

"No danger! I am glad; but pray ask Madame Dalibard to let me see her for a few moments, in her own room. If she come out I will wheel her chair to it. Whether there is danger or not we had better send for other advice than his country doctor, who has perhaps mistaken the case; tell her I am very uneasy, and beg her to join me immediately."

"I think you are quite right, sir;" said the maid, closing the door.

Varney then turning round for the first time, noticed Beck, and said, roughly—

"What do you do here? Wait below till you are sent for."

Beck pulled his forelock, and retreated back, not in the direction of the principal staircase, but towards that used by the servants, and which his researchers into the topography of the mansion had now made known to him. To gain these back stairs he had to pass Lucretia's room; the door stood ajar; Varney's face was turned from him. Beck breathed hard, looked round, then crept within, and, in a moment, was behind the folds of the tapestry.

Soon the chair in which sat Madame Dalibard was drawn by Varney himself into the room.

Shutting the door with care, and turning the key, Gabriel said, with low, suppressed passion—

"Well; your mind seems wandering—speak!"

"It is strange," said Lucretia, in hollow tones, "can Nature turn accomplice, and befriend us here?"

"Nature! did you not last night administer the——"

"No," interrupted Lucretia. "No; she came into the room—she kissed me here, on the brow that even then was meditating murder. The kiss burned; it burns still—it eat into the brain, like remorse. But I did not yield—I read again her false father's protestation of love—I read again the letter announcing the discovery of my son, and remorse lay still—I went forth as before—I stole into her chamber—I had the fatal crystal in my hand—"

"Well! well!"

"And suddenly there came the fearful howl of a dog! and the dog's fierce eyes glared on me—I paused—I trembled—Helen started, woke, called aloud—I turned and fled. The poison was not given.

Varney ground his teeth. "But this illness! Ha! the effect, perhaps, of the drops administered two nights ago."

"No! this illness has no symptoms like those the poison should bequeath; it is but natural fever, a shock on the nerves; she told me she had been wakened by the dog's howl, and seen a dark form, like a thing from the grave, creeping along the floor. But she is really ill—send for the physician; there is nothing in her illness to betray the hand of man. Be it as it may—that kiss still burns—I will stir in this no more. Do what you will yourself!"

"Fool, fool!" exclaimed Varney, almost rudely grasping her arm. "Remember how much we have yet to prepare for—how much to do—and the time so short! Percival's return—perhaps this Greville's arrival. Give me the drugs, I will mix them for her in the potion the physician sends. And when Percival returns—his Helen dead or dying—why *I* will attend on *him!* Silent still? Recall your son! Soon you will clasp him in your arms as a beggar or as the lord of Laughton!"

Lucretia shuddered but did not rise; she drew forth a ring of keys from her bosom, and pointed towards a secretary. Varney snatched the keys, unlocked the secretary, seized the fatal casket, and sate down quietly before it.

When the dire selections were made, and secreted about his person, Varney rose, approached the fire, and blew the wood embers to a blaze.

"And now," he said, with his icy irony of smile, "we may dismiss these useful instruments, perhaps for ever. Though Walter Ardworth, in restoring your son, leaves us dependant on that son's filial affection, and I may have, therefore, little to hope for from the succession, to secure which I have risked, and am again to risk my life, I yet trust to that influence which you never fail to obtain over others. I take it for granted, that, when these halls are Vincent Braddell's, we shall have no need of gold, nor of these pale alchemies. Perish, then, the mute witnesses of our acts!—the elements we have bowed to our will! No poisons shall be found in our hoards! Fire, consume your consuming children!"

As he spoke, he threw upon the hearth the contents of the casket, and set his heel upon the logs. A bluish flame shot up, breaking into countless sparks, and then died.

Lucretia watched him, without speaking.

In coming back towards the table, Varney felt something hard beneath his tread; he stooped, and picked up the ring which has before been described as amongst the ghastly treasures of the casket, and which had rolled on the floor, almost to Lucretia's feet, as he had emptied the contents on the hearth.

"This at least, need tell no tales," said he—"a pity to destroy so rare a piece of workmanship—one, too, which we never can replace!"

"Ay," said Lucretia, abstractedly,—"and, if detection comes, it may secure a refuge from the gibbet—give me the ring!"

"A refuge more terrible than the detection," said Varney—"beware of such a thought;" as Lucretia, taking it from his hand, placed the ring on her finger.

"And now, I leave you for awhile to recollect yourself—to compose your countenance, and your thoughts. I will send for the physician."

Lucretia, with her eyes fixed on the floor, did not heed him, and he withdrew.

So motionless was her attitude—so still her very breathing—that the unseen witness behind the tapestry, who, while struck with horror at what he had overheard (the general purport of which it was impossible that he could misunderstand), was parched with impatience to escape—to rescue his beloved master from his impending fate, and warn him of the fate hovering nearer still over Helen,—ventured to creep along the wall to the threshold—to peer forth from the arras, and seeing her eyes still downcast, to emerge, and place his hand on the door.

At that very moment Lucretia looked up, and saw him gliding from the tapestry—their eyes met—his were fascinated as the bird's by the snake's. At the sight, all her craft—her intellect returned. With a glance, she comprehended the terrible danger that awaited her. Before he was aware of her movement, she was at his side—her hand on his own—her voice in his ear.

"Stir not a step—utter not a sound—or you are——"

Beck did not suffer her to proceed. With the violence rather of fear than of courage, he struck her to the ground; but she clung to him still; and, though rendered for the moment speechless by the suddenness of the blow, her eyes took an expression of unspeakable cruelty and fierceness. He struggled with all his might to shake her off; as he did so, she placed feebly her other hand upon the wrist of the lifted arm that had smitten her, and he felt a sharp pain, as if the nails had fastened into the flesh. This but exasperated him into new efforts. He extricated himself from her grasp, which relaxed, as her lips writhed into a smile of scorn and triumph, and, spurning her while she lay before the threshold, he opened the door, sprang forward, and escaped. No thought had he of tarrying in that House of Pelope, those human shambles, of denouncing Murder in its lair;—to fly, to reach his master, warn and shield him—that was the sole thought which crossed his confused, bewildered brain.

It might be from four to five minutes, that Lucretia, half stunned, half senseless, lay upon those floors; for, besides the violence of her fall, the shock of the struggle, upon nerves weakened by the agony of apprehension, occasioned by the imminent and unforeseen chance of detection, paralyzed her wondrous vigor of mind and frame,—when Varney entered.

"They tell me she sleeps," he said, in hoarse muttered accents, before he saw the prostrate form at his very feet. But Varney's step, Varney's voice, had awakened Lucretia's reason to consciousness and the sense of peril. Rising, though with effort, she related hurriedly, what had passed.

"Fly—fly!" she gasped, as she concluded. "Fly—to detain, to secrete this man somewhere, for the next few hours. Silence him but till then—I have done the rest!"—and her finger pointed to the fatal ring.

Varney waited for no farther words; he hurried out, and made at once to the stables: his shrewdness conjectured that Beck would carry his tale elsewhere. The groom was already gone—(his fellows said) 'without a word, but towards the lodge that led to the Southampton road. Varney ordered the swiftest horse the stables held to be saddled, and said, as he sprang on its back,

"I, too, must go towards Southampton—the poor young lady!—I must prepare your master—he is on his road back to us;" and the last word was scarce out of his lips, as the sparks flew from the flints under the horse's hoofs, and he spurred from the yard.

As he rode at full speed through the park, the villain's mind sped more rapidly than the animal he bestrode—sped from fear to hope—hope to assurance. Grant that the spy lived to tell his tale—incoherent, improbable as the tale would be—who would believe it? How easy to meet tale by tale! The man must own that he was secreted behind the tapestry;—wherefore but to rob? Detected by Madame Dalibard, he had coined this wretched fable. And the spy, too, could not live through the day—he bore Death with him as he rode—he fed its force by his speed—and the effects of the venom itself would be those of frenzy. Tush! his tale, at best, would seem but the ravings of delirium. Still, it was well to track him where he went,—delay him, if possible; and Varney's spurs plunged deep and deeper into the bleeding flanks: on desperately scoured the horse. He passed the lodge—he was on the road—a chaise and pair dashed by him—he heard not a voice exclaim "Varney!"—he saw not the wondering face of John Ardworth;—bending over the tossing

mane—he was deaf, he was blind, to all without and around. A milestone glides by, another, and a third. Ha! his eyes can see now. The object of his chase is before him——he views distinctly, on the brow of yon hill, the horse and the rider, spurring fast, like himself. They descend the hill, horse and horseman, and are snatched from his sight. Up the steep strains the pursuer. He is at the summit. He sees the fugitive before him, almost within hearing. Beck has slackened his speed; he seems swaying to and fro in the saddle. Ho, ho! the barbed ring begins to work in his veins! Varney looks round—not another soul is in sight—a deep wood skirts the road. Place and time seem to favor—Beck has reined in his horse—he bends low over the saddle, as if about to fall. Varney utters a half-suppressed cry of triumph, shakes his reins, and spurs on—when, suddenly (by the curve of the road, hid before), another chaise comes in sight, close where Beck had wearily halted.

The chaise stops—Varney pulls in and draws aside to the hedge-row! Some one within the vehicle is speaking to the fugitive! May it not be St. John himself? To his rage and his terror, he sees Beck painfully dismount from his horse—sees him totter to the door of the chaise—sees a servant leap from the box, and help him up the step—sees him enter. It *must* be Percival on his return! Percival, to whom he tells that story of horror! Varney's brute-like courage forsook him—his heart was appalled. In one of those panics so common with that boldness which is but animal, his sole thought became that of escape. He turned his horse's head to the fence—forced his way desperately through the barrier—made into the wood, and sate there, cowering and listening, till in another minute he heard the wheels rattle on, and the horses gallop hard down the hill towards the park.

The autumn wind swept through the trees—it shook the branches of the lofty ash that overhung the Accursed One. What observer of nature knows not that peculiar sound which the ash gives forth in the blast—not the solemn groan of the oak—not the hollow murmur of the beech, but a shrill wail—a shriek, as of a human voice in sharp anguish. Varney shuddered, as if he had heard the death-cry of his intended victims! Through briars and thickets, torn by the thorns, bruised by the boughs—he plunged deeper and deeper into the wood—gained at length the main path cut through it—found himself in a lane, and rode on, careless whither, till he had reached a small town, about ten miles from Laughton, where he resolved to wait till his nerves had recovered their tone, and he could more calmly calculate the chances of safety.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Lucretia Regains her Son.

It seemed as if now, when danger became most iminent and present—that that very danger served to restore to Lucretia Dalibard all her faculties, which during the earlier day had been steeped in a kind of dreary stupor. The absolute necessity of playing out her execrable part with all suitable and consistent hypocrisy, braced her into iron. But the disguise she assumed was a supernatural effort—it stretched to cracking every fibre of the brain. It seemed almost to herself, as if, her object once gained, either life or consciousness could hold out no more!

A chaise stopped at the porch—two gentlemen descended. The elder paused irresolutely, and at length, taking out a card, inscribed "Mr. Walter Ardworth," said, "If Madame Dalibard can be spoken to for a moment, will you give her this card?"

The footman hesitatingly stared at the card, and then invited the gentlemen into the hall, while he took up the message. Not long had the visitor to wait, pacing the drak oak floors and gazing on the faded banners, before the servant reappeared—Madame Dalibard would see him. He followed his guide up the stairs; while his young companion turned from the hall, and seated himself musingly on one of the benches on the deserted terrace.

Grasping the arms of her chair with both hands, her eyes fixed eagerly on his face, Lucretia Dalibard awaited the welcome visitor.

Prepared as he had been for change, Walter was startled by the ghastly alteration in Lucretia's features, increased, as it was that moment, by all the emotions which raged within. He sank into the chair placed for him opposite

Lucretia, and, clearing his throat, said, falteringly—

"I grieve indeed, madam, that my visit, intended to bring but joy, should chance thus inopportunely. The servant informed me, as we came up the stairs, that your niece was ill, and I sympathize with your natural anxiety—Susan's only child, too—poor Susan!"

"Sir," said Lucretia, impatiently, "these moments are precious. Sir—sir!—my son—my son!" and her eyes glanced to the door. "You have brought with you a companion,—does he wait without?—My son!"

"Madam, give me a moment's patience. I will be brief, and compress what, in other moments, might be a long narrative, into a few sentences."

Rapidly, then, Walter Ardworth passed over the details, unnecessary now to repeat to the reader; the injunctions of Braddell, the delivery of the child to the woman selected by his fellow-sectarian, (who, it seemed, by John Ardworth's recent inquiries, were afterwards expelled the community, and who, there was reason to believe, had been the first seducer of the woman thus recommended). No clue to the child's parentage had been given to the woman, with the sum entrusted for his maintenance, which sum had perhaps been the main cause of her reckless progress to infamy and ruin. The narrator passed lightly over the neglect and cruelty of the nurse, to her abandonment of the child when the money was exhausted. Fortunately, she had overlooked the coral, round its neck. By that coral, and by the initials, V. B., which Ardworth had had the precaution to have burned into the child's wrist, the lost son had been discovered; the nurse herself (found in the person of Martha Skeggs, Lucretia's own servant), had been confronted with the woman to whom she gave the child, and recognized at once. Nor had it heen difficult to obtain from her the confession which completed the evidence.

"In this discovery," concluded Ardworth, "the person I employed met your own agent, and the last links in the chain they traced together. But to *that* person,—to his zeal and intelligence,—you owe the happiness I trust to give you. He sympathized with me the more that he knew you personally, felt for your sorrows, and had a lingering belief that you supposed *him* to be the child you yearned for. Madam, thank my son for the restoration of your own!"

Without sound, Lucretia had listened tc these details, though her countenance changed fearfully as the narrator proceeded. But now she groaned aloud and in agony.

"Nay, madam," said Ardworth, feelingly and in some surprise, "surely the discovery of your son should create gladder emotions. Though, indeed, you will be prepared to find that the poor youth so reared wants education and refinement, I have heard enough to convince me that his dispositions are good and his heart grateful. Judge of this yourself; he is in these walls—he is——"

"Abandoned by a harlot—reared by a beggar! My son!" interrupted Lucretia, in broken sentences. "Well, sir, have you discharged your task! Well have you replaced a mother!"

Before Ardworth could reply, loud and rapid steps were heard in the corridor, and a voice, cracked, indistinct, but vehement. The door was thrown open, and, half-supported by Captain Greville, half dragging him along—his features convulsed, whether by pain or passion,—the spy upon Lucretia's secrets, the denouncer of her crime, tottered to the threshold. Pointing to where she sat with his long, lean arm, Beck exclaimed—"Seize her! I 'cuse her, face to face, of the murder of her niece!—of—of I told you, sir—I told you——"

"Madam," said Captain Greville, "you stand charged by this witness with the most terrible of human crimes. I judge you not. Your niece, I rejoice to hear, yet lives! Pray God that her death be not traced to those kindred hands!"

Turning her eyes from one to the other with a wandering stare, Lucretia Dalibard remained silent. But there was still scorn on her lip, and defiance on her brow. At last she said, slowly, and to Ardworth—

"Where is my son? You say, he is within these walls—call him forth to protect his mother! Give me, at least, my son—my son!"

Her last words were drowned by a fresh burst of fury from her denouncer. In all the coarsest invective his education could supply—in all the hideous vulgarities of his untutored dialect—in that uncurbed licentiousness of tone, look, and manner which passion, once

aroused, gives to the dregs and scum of the populace, Beck poured forth his frightful charges—his frantic execrations. In vain Captain Greville strove to check him. In vain Walter Ardworth sought to draw him from the room. But while the poor wretch—maddening not more with the consciousness of the crime, than with the excitement of the poison in his blood—thus raved and stormed, a terrible suspicion crossed Walter Ardworth: mechanically—as his grasp was on the accuser's arm—he bared the sleeve, and on the wrist were the dark blue letters, burned into the skin, and bearing witness to his identity with the lost Vincent Braddell.

"Hold, hold!" he exclaimed then—"hold, unhappy man!—it is your mother whom you denounce!"

Lucretia sprang up erect—her eyes seemed starting from her head; she caught at the arm pointed towards her in wrath and menace—and there, amidst those letters that proclaimed her son, was the small puncture surrounded by a livid circle, that announced her victim. In the same instant she discovered her child in the man who was calling down upon her head the hatred of Earth and the justice of Heaven, and knew herself his murderess.

She dropped the arm, and sank back on the chair; and, whether the poison had now reached to the vitals, or whether so unwonted a passion in so frail a frame sufficed for the death-stroke, Beck himself, with a low suffocated cry, slid from the hand of Ardworth, and, tottering a step or so, the blood gushed from his mouth, over Lucretia's robe;—his head drooped an instant, and falling, rested first upon her lap—then struck heavily upon the floor. The two men bent over him, and raised him in their arms—his eyes opened and closed—his throat rattled, and, as he fell back into their arms a corpse, a laugh rose close at hand—it rang through the walls, it was heard near and afar—above and below. Not an ear in that house that heard it not. In that laugh fled for ever, till the Judgment-day, from the blackened ruins of her lost soul, the reason of the murdress-mother.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Lots vanish within the Urn.

VARNEY'S self-commune restored to him his constitutional audacity. He returned to Laughton towards the evening, and held a long conference with Greville. Fortunately for him, perhaps, and happily for all, Helen had lost all more dangerous symptoms, and the physician who was in the house, saw in her state nothing not easily to be accounted for by natural causes. Percival had arrived, had seen Helen—no wonder she was better. Both from him and from Helen, Madame Dalibard's fearful condition was for the present concealed. Ardworth's story, and the fact of Beck's identity with Vincent Braddell, were also reserved for a later occasion. . . . The tale which Beck had poured into the ear of Greville, (when recognizing the St. John livery the Captain stopped his chaise to inquire if Percival were at the Hall, and when thrilled by the hideous import of his broken reply, that gentleman had caused him to enter the vehicle to explain himself further) Varney with his wonted art and address, contrived to strip of all probable semblance. Evidently the poor lad had been already delirious, his story must be deemed the night-mare of his disordered reason. Varney insisted upon surgical examination as to the cause of his death—the membranes of the brain were found surcharged with blood, as in cases of great mental excitement—the slight puncture in the wrist, ascribed to the prick of a rusty nail, provoked no suspicion. If some doubts remained still on Greville's acute mind, he was not eager to express, still less to act, upon them. Helen was declared to be out of danger. Percival was safe—why affix by minute inquiry into the alleged guilt of Madame Dalibard, (already so awfully affected by the death of her son and by the loss of her reason) so foul a stain on the honored family of St. John? But Greville was naturally anxious to free the house as soon as possible, both of Varney and that ominous Lucretia, whose sojourn under its roof seemed accursed. He therefore readily assented when Varney proposed—as his obvious and personal duty, to take charge of his mother-in-law, and remove her to London for immediate advice.

At the dead of the black-clouded night—no moon and no stars—the son of Olivier Dalibard bore away the form of the once formidable Lucretia:—the *form*, for the mind was gone—that teeming, restless, and fertile intellect, which had carried along the projects, with the preter-human energies of the fiend, was hurled into night and chaos.. Manacled and bound, for at times her paroxysms were terrible, and all partook of the destructive and murderous character, which her faculties, when present, had betrayed, she was placed in the vehicle by the shrinking side of her accomplice.

Long before he arrived in London, Varney had got rid of his fearful companion. His chaise had stopped at the iron gates of a large building, somewhat out of the main road, and the doors of the Madhouse closed on Lucretia Dalibard.

Varney then hastened to Dover with intention of flight into France; he was just about to step into the vessel when he was tapped rudely on the shoulder, and a determined voice said—"Mr. Gabriel Varney, you are my prisoner!"

"For what—some paltry debt?" said Varney haughtily.

"For forgery on the bank of England!"

Varney's hand plunged into his vest. The officer seized it in time, and wrested the blade from his grasp. Once arrested for an offence it was impossible to disprove, although the very smallest of which his conscience might charge him, Varney sank into the blackest despair. Though he had often boasted, not only to others, but to his own vain breast, of the easy courage with which, when life ceased to yield enjoyment, he could dismiss it by the act of his own will—though he had possessed himself of Lucretia's murderous ring, and death, if fearful, was therefore at his command, self-destruction was the last thought that occurred to him—that morbid excitability of fancy, which, whether in his art or in his deeds, had led him to strange delight in horror, now served but to haunt him with the images of death in those ghastliest shapes familiar to them who look only into the bottom of the charnel, and see but the rat and the worm, and the loathsome agencies of corruption. It was not the despair of conscience that seized him, it was the abject clinging to life;—not the remorse of the soul,—*that* still slept within him, too noble an agency for one so debased—but the gross physical terror. As the fear of the tiger once aroused is more paralyzing than that of the deer, proportioned to the savageness of a disposition to which fear is a novelty, so the very boldness of Varney, coming only from the perfection of the nervous organization and unsupported by one moral sentiment, once struck down was corrupted into the vilest cowardice. With his audacity, his shrewdness forsook him.

Advised by his lawyer to plead guilty, he obeyed, and the sentence of transportation for life gave him, at first a feeling of reprieve; but when his imagination began to picture, in the darkness of his cell, all the true tortures of that penalty, not so much, perhaps, to the uneducated peasant felon, inured to toil, and familiarized with coarse companionship, as to one pampered like himself by all soft and half womanly indulgencies—the shaven hair—the convict's dress—the rigorous privation—the drudging toil;—the exile seemed as grim as the grave. In the dotage of faculties smitten into drivelling—he wrote to the Home Office, offering to disclose secrets connected with crimes that had hitherto escaped or baffled justice, on condition that his sentence might be repealed, or mitigated into the gentler forms of ordinary transportation. No answer was returned to him—but his letter provoked research—circumstances connected with his uncle's death, and with various other dark passages in his life—sealed against him all hope of more merciful sentence, and when some acquaintances whom his art had made for him, and who, while grieving for his crime, saw in it some excuses, (ignorant of his feller deeds), sought to intercede in his behalf; the reply of the Home Office was obvious, "He is a fortunate man to have been tried and condemned for his least offence." Not one indulgence that could distinguish him from the most execrable ruffian, condemned to the same sentence, was conceded.

The idea of the gibbet lost all its horror. Here was a gibbet for every hour! No hope—no escape. Already that Future Doom which comprehends the 'For ever' opened upon him, black and fathomless. The hour-glass was broken up—the hand of the time-piece was arrested. The beyond stretched

before him, without limit, without goal—on into Annihilation or into Hell.

EPILOGUE TO PART THE SECOND.

STAND, O Man! upon the hill-top—in the stillness of the evening hour—and gaze, not with joyous, but with contented eyes, upon the beautiful world around thee! See, where the mists, soft and dim, rise over the green meadows, through which the rivulet steals its way! See where, broadest and stillest, the wave expands to the full smile of the setting sun—and the willow that trembles on the breeze—and the oak that stands firm in the storm, are reflected back, peaceful both, from the clear glass of the tides! See, where, begirt by the gold of the harvests, and backed by the pomp of a thousand groves—the roofs of the town, bask, noiseless, in the calm glow of the sky. Not a sound from those abodes floats in discord to thine ear,—only from the church-tower, soaring high above the rest, perhaps, faintly heard through the stillness, swells the note of the holy bell. Along the mead low skims the swallow—on the wave, the silver circlet, breaking into spray, shows the sport of the fish. See, the Earth, how serene, though all eloquent of activity and life! See the Heavens, how benign, though dark clouds, by yon mountain, blend the purple with the gold! Gaze contented, for Good is around thee—not joyous, for Evil is the shadow of Good! Let thy soul pierce through the veil of the senses, and thy sight plunge deeper than the surface which gives delight to thine eye. Below the glass of that river, the pike darts on his prey; the circle in the wave, the soft plash amongst the reeds, are but signs of Destroyer and of Victim.

In the ivy sound the oak by the margin, the owl hungers for the night, which shall give its beak and its talons living food for its young; and the spray of the willow trembles with the wing of the redbreast, whose bright eye sees the worm on the sod. Canst thou count too, O Man! all the cares—all the sins—that those noiseless roof-tops conceal? With every curl of that smoke to the sky, a human thought soars as dark, a human hope melts as briefly. And the bell from the church-tower, that to thy ear gives but music, perhaps knolls for the dead. The swallow but chases the moth, and the cloud that deepens the glory of the heaven. and the sweet shadows on the earth, nurses but the thunder that shall rend the grove, and the storm that shall devastate the harvests. Not with fear, not with doubt, recognize, O Mortal, the presence of Evil in the world.* Hush thy heart in the humbleness of awe, that its mirror may reflect as serenely the shadow as the light. Vainly, for its moral, dost thou gaze on the landscape, if thy soul puts no check on the dull delight of the senses. Two wings only raise thee to the summit of Truth —where the Cherub shall comfort the sorrow, where the Seraph shall enlighten the joy. Dark as ebon, spreads the one wing, white as snow gleams the other—mournful as thy *reason* when it descends into the deep—exulting as thy *faith* when it springs to the day-star.

Beck sleeps in the churchyard of Laughton. He had lived to frustrate the monstrous design intended to benefit himself, and to become the instrument, while the victim of the dread Eumenides. That done, his life passed with the crimes that had gathered around, out of the sight of mortals. Helen slowly regained her health in the atmosphere of love and happiness; and Lady Mary soon learned to forget the fault of the Father in the virtues of the Child. Married to Percival, Helen fulfilled the destines of woman's genius, in calling forth into action man's earnest duties. She breathed into Percival's warm beneficent heart, her own more steadfast and divine intelligence. Like him she grew ambitious, by her he became distinguished. While I write, fair children play under the cedars of Laughton. And the husband tells the daughters to resemble their mother;—and the wife's highest praise to the boys is—"You have spoken truth or done good like your father."

John Ardworth has not paused in his career, nor belied the promise of his youth. Though the elder Ardworth, partly by his own exertions, parlty by his second marriage with the

* Not, indeed, that the evil here narrated is the *ordinary* evil of the world. The lesson it inculcates would be lost, if so construed; but that the mystery of evil, whatever its degree, only increases the necessity of faith in the vindication of the contrivance which requires infinity for its range, and eternity for its consummation. It is in the existence of evil that man finds his duties, and his soul its progress.

daughter of the French merchant (through whose agency he had corresponded with Fielden), had realized a moderate fortune, it but sufficed for his own wants, and for the children of his later nuptials, upon whom the bulk of it was settled.

Hence, happily perhaps for himself and others, the easy circumstances of his father allowed to John Ardworth no exemption from labor. His success in the single episode from active life to literature, did not intoxicate or mislead him. He knew that his real element was not in the field of letters, but in the world of men. Not undervaluing the noble destinies of the Author, he felt that those destinies, if realized to the utmost, demanded powers other than his own; and that man is only true to his genius when the genius is at home in his career. He would not renounce for a brief celebrity distant and solid fame. He continued for a few years in patience and privation, and confident self-reliance, to drudge on, till the occupation for the intellect fed by restraint, and the learning accumulated by study, came and found the whole man developed and prepared. Then, he rose rapidly from step to step—then, still retaining his high enthusiasm, he enlarged his sphere of action from the cold practice of law, into those vast social improvements which law, rightly regarded, should lead, and vivify, and create. Then, and long before the twenty years he had imposed on his probation had expired, he gazed again upon the senate and the abbey, and saw the doors of the one open to his resolute tread, and anticipated the glorious sepulchre, which heart and brain should win him in the other.

John Ardworth has never married. When Percival rebukes him for his celibacy, his lip quivers slightly, and he applies himself with more dogged earnestness to his studies or his career. But he never complains that his lot is lonely or his affections void. For him who aspires, and for him who loves, life may lead through the thorns, but it never stops in the desert.

On the minor personages involved in this history, there is little need to dwell. Mr. Fieldon, thanks to St. John, has obtained a much better living in the rectory of Laughton; but has found new sources of pleasant trouble for himself, in seeking to drill into the mind of Percival's eldest son the elements of Euclid, and the principles of Latin syntax.

We may feel satisfied that the Miver's will go on much the same while trades enriches without refining, and while, nevertheless, right feelings in the common paths of duty may unite charitable emotions with graceless language.

We may rest assured that the poor widow who had reared the lost son of Lucretia, received from the bounty of Percival all that could comfort her for his death.

We have no need to track the dull crimes of Martha, or the quick, cunning vices of Grabman, to their inevitable goals, in the hospital or the prison, the dunghill or the gibbet.

Of the elder Ardworth our parting notice may be less brief. We first saw him in sanguine and generous youth, with higher principles and clearer insight into honor than William Mainwaring. We have seen him next a spendthrift and a fugitive, his principles debased, and his honor dimmed. He presents to us no uncommon example of the corruption engendered by that vulgar self-indulgence which mortgages the morrow for the pleasures of to-day. No Deity presides where Prudence is absent. Man, a world in himself, requires for the development of his faculties, patience; and for the balance of his actions, order. Even where he had deemed himself most oppressively made the martyr—viz., in the profession of mere political opinions, Walter Ardworth had but followed out into theory the restless, uncalculating impatience, which had brought adversity on his manhood, and, despite his constitutional cheerfulness, shadowed his age with remorse. The death of the child committed to his charge, long (perhaps to the last) embittered his pride in the son whom without merit of his own, Providence had spared to a brighter fate. But for the faults which had banished him his country, and the habits which had seared his sense of duty, could that child have been so abandoned, and have so perished?

It remains only to cast our glance over the punishments which befel the sensual villany of Varney,—the intellectual corruption of his fell stepmother.

These two persons had made a very trade of those crimes to which man's law awards death. They had said in their hearts that

they would dare the crime, but elude the penalty. By wonderful subtlety, craft, and dexterity, which reduced guilt to a science, Providence scemed, as in disdain of the vulgar instruments of common retribution, to concede to them that which they had schemed for,—escape from the rope and gibbet. Varney, saved from detection of his darker and more inexpiable crimes, punished only for the least one—retained what had seemed to him the master boon—life! Safer still from the law, no mortal eye had plumbed the profound night of Lucretia's awful guilt. Murderess of husband and son, the blinded law bade her go, unscathed, unsuspected. Direct as from Heaven, without a cloud, fell the thunderbolt. Is the life they have saved worth the prizing? Doth the chalice, unsplit on the ground, not return to the hand? Is the sudden pang of the hangman more fearful than the doom which they breathe and bear? Look, and judge!

Behold that dark ship on the waters! Its burthens are not of Ormus and Tyre. No goodly merchandise doth it waft over the wave, no blessing cleaves to its sails, freighted with terror and with guilt, with remorse and despair, or more ghastly than either, the sullen apathy of souls hardened into stone, it carries the dregs and offal of the old world to populate the new. On a bench in that ship, sit side by side two men, companions assigned to each other. Pale, abject, cowering, all the bravery rent from his garb, all the gay insolence vanished from his brow—can that hollow-eye, haggard wretch, be the same man whose senses opened on every joy, whose nerves mocked at every peril? But beside him, with a grin of vile glee on his features, all muscle and brawn in the form, all malice, at once spiteful and dull, in the heavy eye, sits his fit comrade—the Grave-stealer!

At the first glance each had recognized each, and the prophecy and the vision rushed back upon the daintier convict. If he seek to escape from him, the grave-stealer claims him as a prey, he threatens him with his eye as a slave, he kicks him with his hoof as they sit, and laughs at the writhing of the pain. Carry on your gaze from the ship:—hear the cry from the mast-head—see the land arise from the waste! A land without hope! At first, despite the rigor of the Home Office, the education and intelligence of Varney have their price—the sole crime for which he is convicted is not of the darkest. He escapes from that hideous comrade, he can teach as a schoolmaster;—let his brain work, not his hands! But the most irredeemable of convicts are ever those of nurture, and birth, and culture better than the ruffian-rest. You may enlighten the clod, but the meteor still must feed on the marsh: And the pride, and the vanity, work where the crime itself seems to lose its occasion. Ever avid, ever grasping, he falls, step by step, in the foul sink, and the colony sees in Gabriel Varney its most pestilent rogue; arch-convict amidst convicts, doubly lost amongst the damned; they banish him to the sternest of the penal settlements—they send him forth with the vilest to break stones upon the roads. Shrivelled, and bowed, and old, prematurely—see that sharp face peering forth amongst that gang, scarcely human,—see him cringe to the lash of the scornful overseer—see the pairs chained together, night and day! Ho, ho! his comrade hath found him again, the Artist and the Grave-stealer leashed together! Conceive that fancy, so nurtured by habit—those tastes, so womanized by indulgence—the one suggesting the very horrors that are not, the other revolting at all toil as a torture.

But intellect not all gone, though hourly dying heavily down to the level of the brute, yet schemes for delivery and escape. Let the plot ripen, and the heart bound: break his chain—set him free—send him forth to the wilderness! Hark, the whoop of the wild men! See those things that ape our species dance and gibber round the famishing hunted wretch. Hark how he shrieks at the torture! How they tear, and they pinch, and they burn, and they rend him! They, too, spare his life—it is charmed! A Caliban amidst Calibans, they heap him with their burthens, and feed him on their offal. Let him live; he loved life for himself, he has cheated the gibbet,—LET HIM LIVE! Let him watch, let him once more escape; all naked and mangled, let him wander back to the huts of his gang. Lo! where he kneels, the foul tears streaming down, and cries aloud,—"I have broken all your laws, I will tell you all my crimes; I ask but one sentence—hang me up—let me die!" And from the gang groan many voices—"Hang

us up—let us die!" The overseer turns on his heel, and Gabriel Varney again is chained to the laughing Grave-stealer.

You enter those gates so jealousy guarded —you pass, with a quick beat of the heart, by those groups on the lawn, though they are harmless;—you follow your guide through those passages; where the open doors will permit, you see the emperor brandish his sceptre of straw—hear the speculator counting his millions—sigh, where the maiden sits smiling, the return of her shipwrecked lover—or gravely shake the head and hurry on, where the fanatic raves his Apocalypse, and reigns in judgment on the world;—you pass by strong grates into corridors gloomier and more remote. Nearer and nearer, you hear the yell, and the oath and blaspheming curse—you are in the heart of the Mad-house, where they chain those at once cureless and dangerous—who have but sense enough left them to smite, and to throttle, and to murder.

Your guide opens that door, massive as a wall, you see (as we, who narrate, have seen her) Lucretia Dalibard:—a grisly, squalid, ferocious mockery of a human being—more appalling and more fallen, than Dante ever fabled in his spectres, than Swift ever scoffed in his Ya-hoos!—Only where all other feature seems to have lost its stamp of humanity, still burns with unquenchable fever—the red devouring eye. That eye never seems to sleep, or, in sleep, the lid never closes over it. As you shrink from its light, it seems to you as if the mind that had lost coherence and harmony, still retained latent and incommunicable *consciousness* as its curse. For days, for weeks—that awful maniac will preserve obstinate, unbroken silence; but, as the eye never closes, so the hands never rest—they open and grasp, as if at some palpable object on which they close, vice-like, as a bird's talons on its prey—sometimes they wander over that brow, where the furrows seem torn as the thunder scars, as if to wipe from it a stain, or charm from it a pang—sometimes they gather up the hem of that sordid robe, and seem, for hours together, striving to rub from it a soil. Then out from prolonged silence, without cause or warning, will ring, peal after peal (till the frame, exhausted with the effort, sinks senseless into stupor) the frightful laugh. But speech, intelligible and coherent, those lips rarely yield.

There are times, indeed, when the attendants are persuaded that her mind in part returns to her; and those times, experience has taught them to watch with peculiar caution. The crisis evinces itself by a change in the manner—by a quick apprehension of all that is said—by a straining anxious look at the dismal walls—by a soft fawning docility—by murmured complaints of the chains that fetter —and (though, as we have said, but very rarely), by prayers, that seem rational, for greater ease and freedom.

In the earlier time of her dread captivity, perhaps, when it was believed at the asylum that she was a patient of condition, with friends who cared for her state, and would liberally reward her cure,—they, in those moments, relaxed her confinement, and sought the gentler remedies their art employs; but then invariably, and, it was said, with a cunning that surpassed all the proverbial astuteness of the mad, she turned this indulgence to the most deadly uses—she crept to the pallet of some adjacent sufferer weaker than herself, and the shrieks that brought the attendants into the cell, scarcely saved the intended victim from her hands. It seemed, in those imperfectly lucid intervals, as if the reason only returned to guide her to destroy—only to animate the broken mechanism into the beast of pray.

Years have now passed since her entrance within those walls. He who placed her there never had returned—he had given a false name —no clue to him was obtained—the gold he had left was but the quarter's pay. When Varney had been first apprehended, Percival requested the younger Ardworth to seek the forger in prison—and to question him as to Madame Dalibard; but Varney was then so apprehensive that, even if still insane, her very ravings might betray his share in her crimes, or still more, if she recovered, that the remembrance of her son's murder would awaken the repentance and the confession of crushed despair, that the wretch had judged it wiser to say that his accomplice was no more—that her insanity had already terminated in death. The place of her confinement thus continued a secret locked in his own breast. Egotist to the last, she was henceforth dead to him—why not to the world?

Thus the partner of her crimes had cut off her sole resource, in the compassion of her

unconscious kindred;—thus the gates of the living world were shut to her evermore. Still, in a kind of compassion, or as an object of experiment—as a subject to be dealt with unscrupulously in that living dissection-hall—her grim jailers did not grudge her an asylum. But, year after year, the attendance was more slovenly — the treatment more harsh; and strange to say, while the features were scarcely recognizable—while the form underwent all the change which the shape suffers when mind deserts it, that prodigious vitality which belonged to the temperament still survived. No signs of decay are yet visible. Death, as if spurning the carcass, stands inexorably afar off. Baffler of man's law, *thou*, too, hast escaped with life! Not for thee is the sentence, "Blood for blood!" Thou livest — thou mayst pass the extremest boundaries of age. Live on, to wipe the blood from thy robe!—LIVE ON!

Not for the coarse object of creating an idle terror—not for the shock upon the nerves and the thrill of the grosser interest which the narrative of crime creates, has this book been compiled from the facts and materials afforded to the author. When the great German poet describes, in not the least noble of his lyrics, the sudden apparition of some 'Monster Fate' in the circles of careless Joy, he assigns to him who teaches the world through parable or song, the right to invoke the spectre. It is well to be awakened at times from the easy common-place that surrounds our habitual life—to cast broad and steady, and patient light on the darker secrets of the heart; on the vaults and caverns of the social state, over which we build the market-place and the palace.

We recover from the dread, and the awe, and the half-incredulous wonder, to set closer watch upon our inner and hidden selves. In him who cultivates only the reason, and suffers the heart and the spirit to lie waste and dead, who schemes, and constructs, and revolves round the axle of self, unwarmed by the affections, unpoised by the attraction of right,—lies the germ Fate might ripen into the guilt of Olivier Dalibard. Let him who but lives through the senses, spread the wings of the fancy in the gaudy glare of enjoyment corrupted, avid to seize, and impatient to toil, whose faculties are curbed but to the range of physical perception, whose very courage is but the strength of the nerves, who developes but the animal as he stifles the man,—let him gaze on the villany of Varney, and startle to see some magnified shadow of himself thrown dimly on the glass! Let those who, with powers to command and passions to wing the powers, would sweep without scruple from the aim to the end—who, trampling beneath their footprint of iron the humanities that bloom up in their path—would march to success with the proud stride of the destroyer, hear, in the laugh of yon maniac murderess, the glee of the fiend they have wooed to their own souls! Guard well, O Heir of Eternity, the portal of sin—the *thought!* From the thought to the deed, the subtler thy brain, and the bolder thy courage, the briefer and straighter is the way. Read these pages in disdain of self-commune—they shall revolt thee, not instruct; read them, looking steadfastly within, and how humble soever the art of the narrator, the facts he narrates, like all history, shall teach by example Every human Act, good or ill; is an Angel to guide or to warn; * and the deeds of the worst have messages from Heaven to the listening hearts of the best. Amidst the glens in the Appennine,—in the lone wastes of Calabria, the sign of the Cross marks the spot, where a deed of violence has been done; on all that pass by the road, the symbol has varying effect; sometimes it startles the conscience, sometimes it invokes the devotion; the robber drops the blade, the priest counts the rosary. So is it with the record of crime: and in the witness of Guilt, Man is thrilled with the whisper of Religion.

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* Our Acts our Angels are—or good or ill:
The fatal shadows that walk by us still.
—FLETCHER.

A WORD TO THE PUBLIC:*

CONTAINING HINTS TOWARDS A CRITICAL ESSAY UPON THE ARTISTIC PRINCIPLES AND ETHICAL DESIGNS OF FICTION.

It is not as a retort to attacks that I write these pages. They are designed, it is true, to remove errors, whether of wilful misstatement, or honest misconception, on subjects affecting myself. But as those subjects are connected with interests in literature, very general and important, I shall endeavor to preserve the dispassionate tone proper to an inquiry addressed to the candor of the Public, and the consideration of educated men.

I pass by all assaults that may appear to have exceeded the due licence of criticism with the single remark,—that wherever personal motives are strong enough to violate the ordinary decorum of literary censure, the reader must be prepared to expect that they will suffice to corrupt all integrity of statement. Thus extracts will be garbled and misquoted —sentences stripped of the context that explains them,—and opinions, which the writer most earnestly holds up to reprobation, and places in the lips of characters whom he draws but to condemn, be deliberately cited as the sentiments of the author himself. I do not stop to comment on artifices like these; if, from no broader principle than that of justice to the author, they need rebuke or are capable of discouragement—discouragement and rebuke will come more efficiently from others; nor should I have made even this brief reference to matters not immediately essential to my argument, if some temporary injustice to the Author were the only evil such practices could possibly effect; but thus, a work the most innocent can not only be represented as mischievous, but in reality rendered so. Let me forestal the subsequent inquiry, and assume for the moment, that the true moral, whether of "*Eugene Aram*," or the "*Children of Night*," be either salutary or harmless, and then let me suppose it gravely asserted in some two or three of those popular journals which penetrate every corner of society, read alike by the educated and the ignorant, the good and the bad—the sole vehicles of literary information to those whom it is most facile and most dangerous to mislead—that the author, a man of some social position, and some acknowledged repute in letters, lends all the weight of his name and auth rity to the defence and encouragement of crime,—is the author himself the party most seriously aggrieved? The injury done to *him* may be wholly effaced by the gradual influence of the judicious, and the tranquil investigation of time; but is it so easy to efface the injury effected by garbled extracts, and wilful misrepresentation, upon minds uninstructed and perverted, at which the book itself, with its

* CERTAIN criticisms on "LUCRETIA," at its first appearance, having been made the vehicle for remarks of no common virulence on the Author's general writings, he took the occasion thus afforded to him, to put forth in the following pages, entitled, "A WORD TO THE PUBLIC," not only a vindication of his own ethical designs, in his own various fictions, but an exposition of the prerogatives of inventive art in the selection of the agencies employed towards moving the passions of pity and terror. The "WORD TO THE PUBLIC" is still retained as an appendix to this romance: for though it may be no longer needed as a defence of the works which Time itself has sufficed to clear from the charges to which they were once subjected, it may still have an interest to the general reader as a somewhat elaborate analysis of the main causes that conduce to emotions legitimately tragic. If, therefore, it have any value, it is less as the vindication which an author makes of his own works, than as the result of the study he has devoted to the masterpieces of others;—in short, as a critical essay—offering suggestions as to the grander uses of imaginative compositions in the passions which they openly sway, and the warnings which they unconsciously bequeath.

real lessons, never may arrive, and which only too readily accept the sanction that the newspaper assures them it affords?

So far as concerns myself, I am contented to appeal, from assailants of this kind, to those cultivators of literature with whom I may claim fellowship, and to that Public, who, I trust, have connected gentler associations with my name.

With regard to those purely literary faults and defects which afford the fair questions to criticism, though, some years since, I might have been tempted to enter into the vindication of a few, at least, out of the many with which I have been charged, I am not now disposed to intrude upon the public a defence against censures morally unimportant and legitimately made. Good or bad, my works have been written with such care as I could bestow on them; and in all that affects their literary reputation alone, I willingly leave them to that calm and equitable decision between praise and blame which time only can pronounce.

I confine myself to questions of graver moment than those which relate to the mere skill or ability displayed by a living writer in the treatment of the subjects he selects, and if I would borrow something from indulgence, it is only a certain leniency whenever an earnest wish to correct misconception may render me tedious in explanation. For the charges against me are not limited to a single work; and it is necessary that I should invite an inquiry, from the warrantable conclusions of which, I trust, my entire vindication will proceed—viz., into the recognized principles of fiction, and the fair liberty in the choice of materials, which it is the interest, both of art and the public to permit to imaginative writers.

In this discussion, I ask, then, but for that patience with which we listen to the most ordinary mechanic, when at home in the subject of a craft to which his toil and life have been applied. For several years, I have studied the art of which I treat; and it is but reasonable to suppose that I should speak with some knowledge of the principles which, applied to practice, have gained me whatever reputation I possess. I will presume that the reader enters on the consideration of the mattes which he is called upon to adjudicate, not with a mind steeled against conviction, and determined to resist, but rather with a juryman's sincere desire to judge for himself, and exclude from the trial all that he has heard out of court;—regretting generously if, at the close, he is obliged to condemn, rejoicing honestly if his reason and his conscience allow him to acquit. And if there be many who come to this inquiry with minds so prepared, amongst them there may be those who unthinkingly have done me wrong, and who, after hearing the evidence I shall adduce, and more carefully considering the laws by which I should be judged, may depart from the hearing with a manly desire to repair an injury—small indeed, if it were as lightly felt as it is heedlessly inflicted!

It is not so easy, as at first it may appear, to decide upon the moral tendencies and designs of a writer. Upon no conceivable subject have more signal mistakes been made; and none affords us a more memorable warning to judge of others with modest charity and cautious deliberation. It would take a large catalogue to contain the titles of those books which have been denounced as immoral and mischievous, and which are now universally acknowledged as the sources of harmless pleasure or ethical instruction. From the father of poetry, from Homer himself, who has been charged "with degrading the gods, and demoralizing man"—"sanctioning perjury and avarice,"—"holding up even parricides to reverence"—"teaching what is wicked, and debasing what is good"—through the long order of his illustrious children,—we can find few whom we now recognize amongst our most genial civilizers, and our gentlest teachers, who have not, at one time or another, been subjected to the common charge of immoral tendency and pernicious effect.

Since the good bishop Heliodorus saw his tale of *Theagenes and Chariclea* condemned by a synod, as prejudicial to the young; since Mahomet denounced in the Koran those harmless tales, of which the *Arabian Nights* are a sample, novelists have been treated, if possible, more harshly than their elder brothers the poets. There is no novel we more willingly give to the schoolboy, than *Don Quixote*, yet Cervantes has been driven to find in Sismondi a defence "against those who consider *Don Quixote* the most melancholy book ever written," and (adds Mr. Hallam) "who no doubt consider it also as one of the most im

moral, as chilling and pernicious as its influence on the social converse of mankind, as '*The Prince*' of Machiavel is in their political intercourse." * There is no tale that with safer conscience we submit to the simplest understanding, than the *Rasselas* of Dr. Johnson, and yet it has been charged with instilling the same, more than doubtful, moral, that freezes men's hopes in the rockery of *Candide.*† Philosophers the most earnest, moralists the most rigid, have been as liable to this erring accusation, as the wildest of poets and the most careless of romancers. Locke presides over our academies, yet he has been denounced as the founder of a sect of materialists. Cudworth is received amongst the holiest champions of religion, yet Warburton informs us that he never published the secod part of his work, because of the malignity that had visited the first. In the same painful and warning mistake of shallow judgments, our divines themselves have been assailed, and the twin lights of our religious literature, Tillotson and Taylor, calumniated—the one was a Socinian in disguise, the other as a schismatic in design.

Time brings justice at the end, and vindicates the name if it preserves the work. Happy he, whose justification comes before the hand has forgot its cunning, and the tomb shut out the sweets of the atonement from the bitterness of the wrong! Happy he, too, who, early inured to calumny, grows indifferent to its sting! He will not, at least, die a lunatic, like Ritson, "stabbed by assassins in the dark,"—nor like Cummyns, waste away "in the slow fever produced by an anonymous assault." ‡

Do not let me be suspected of so egregious a conceit, as implying a claim to association with the lofty names that I have cited. I but use the argument the citations suggest, to establish the simple truth which literary history affords to a more intelligent, and I trust, a more liberal age—viz., that the pulic should receive with great caution rash accusations against the motives of authors and the latent immorality of works. For, easy to the lowest understanding is this general charge of immoral tendency and object—and tempting it is to malice, when it cannot deny the literary reputation which it envies—to assail the moral design, because *that* (always more or less complicated) needs some effort beyond the commonplace indifference of the public to perceive and to defend. Of whatever is plainly obscene and licentious, of whatever openly assails the acknowledged principles of religion, or saps the moral foundations of society, all men may judge; and on these, at least in our own age, no differences of opinion are likely to exist. But the wise and the honest will be wary of ascribing to writers secret tendencies and objects at variance, not only with the designs they announce, but the reputation accorded to them by judges, whether at home or abroad, uninfluenced by personal predilections, or political bias.

And I fear that the writer, the most really dangerous to society is to be found in the critic, who bids the young and unthinking search, amidst the most popular forms of literature, for excuses to vice and sanctions to crime, which the author himself never intended, and which, without such directions, no reader would have suspected. It is critics like these who would pervert to poison the most innocent intellectual nutriment; who would interpret the exhortations of St. Augustine into an appeal to the passions, or the "whole Duty of Man" into a libel on one's neighbor. Shortly after Addison's "*Cato*" had appeared upon the stage, an unhappy person destroyed himself, leaving upon his table a paper with these words—

> "That must be good
> Which Cato did and Addison approved."

One must mournfully regret this poor man's perverse misconstruction of "*Cato;*" yet who can say, for that reason, that "*Cato*" is dangerous, or that Addison sanctioned suicide? But, suppose that Addison had lived, and "*Cato*" been produced, in our day, and suppose that some writer in one of our popular journals had, after some prelude upon "morbid idiosyncracies and the frequency of suicides," instead of removing from such "morbid idiosyncracies" the dangerous impression that Addison approved self-slaughter—preferred rather to gratify a spleen against the

* Hallam's History of Literature, vol. iii. p. 156.

† Voltaire congratulated himself, indeed, that "Candide" had appeared before "Rasselas," so that the scoffing wit might not be accused of plagiarising his moral from our serious and sturdy Doctor.

‡ Disraeli, "Curiosities of Literature."

poet, in asserting that the design of the tragedy and the purpose of the author *were* devoted to the mischievous vindication of suicide—would not that writer have incurred the gravest responsibilities, afforded to "morbid idiosyncracies" the very stimulus it was his duty to withhold, and encouraged the very error it was his duty to expose? Let the editor of every influential journal weigh well the considerations this reflection should suggest, and perhaps he may confess that the more readily an author's intention may be misconceived by sickly or ignorant minds, the more the popular reviewer, whose opportunities give him the quickest and readiest facility towards correcting such mistakes, should seek not to confirm but dispel the dangerous misconception.

It is not given to all to have genius—it is given to all to have honesty of purpose; an ordinary writer may have this in common with the greatest—that he may compose his works with sincere and distinct views of promoting truth and administering to knowledge. I claim this intention fearlessly for myself. And if, contrary to my most solemn wishes, and my most thoughtful designs, any one of my writings can be shown by dispassionate argument, to convey lessons tending to pervert the understanding, and confound the eternal distinction between right and wrong, I will do my best to correct the error, by stamping on it my own condemnation, and omitting it from the list of those it does not shame me to acknowledge.

Every reader, who has honored my books with some attention, must long since have recognized in their very imperfections as works of art—the favorite and peculiar studies of their author; some, especially, of the companions of my youth, must often have traced to those inquiries, which we pursued together through the labyrinth of metaphysics, and amidst the ingenious speculations of writers who have sought by the analysis of our ideas to arrive at the springs of our manifold varieties in conduct, that over-indulgence of moralizing deductions, and those often tedious attempts to explain the workings of mind, which have weakened the effect of my characters, and interrupted the progress of my plots. But no man can have made the study of the great investigators of human conduct his passion and his habit, and ever consciously and wilfully meditate a work at variance with morality;—more likely is it that he will err in the opposite extreme, and undertake no work, however light, without a purpose too sharply definite. Even in the object on which he is most intent, it is true that he may err,—the gravest moralists, the wisest divines, have so erred; human judgment cannot be infallible:

"Tacere
Tutum semper erit."—

"If one would be safe, one has no resource but to be silent." But an error of this kind is one only of mistaken, yet honest intention, and may surely be exposed, without heated invectives, and calumnious personalites.

What is the charge that has been brought against me urged and re-urged, in words which I will not trust myself to repeat, and in a spirit which I will not pause to expose? I state its broad substance, I believe fairly in this, "That I have had a morbid and mischievous pass for treating of crime and guilt—that it is the prevailing character of my books to made heroes of criminals and felons."

Now it is the interest of all writers, from the greatest poet to the meanest novelist, that the due license of fiction in the materials it selects, should be clearly laid down and generally admitted. And it is no less to the interest of the public, that writers should not be scared, by tacit acquiescence in charges most painful to honorable men, from whatever exposition of evil as it exists—whatever investigation of the human mind, in its sublimity or its baseness, its virtues or its gui t, the uniform example of received authorities in literature, has proved it to be salutary or safe to permit to the scope of the poet, and the purpose of the teacher.

I shall proceed to show that, if the delineation of crime *did* afford the ordinary and favorite subject of my works—if criminals or felons *were* made what is called the heroes (that is, the leading characters) in all or most of them,—such a charge would only prove the ignorance of those who advance it, whether of the most acknowledged privileges of fiction, or the scope of the moral which writers the most blamless have been left at liberty to develop and enforce. But the charge itself is so utterly untrue, that a single glance over the list of my publications will suffice to refute it. I annex that list as my reply:

PELHAM.
THE DISOWNED.
DEVEREUX.
GODOLPHIN.
*PAUL CLIFFORD.
THE PILGRIMS OF THE RHINE.
*EUGENE ARAM.
THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII.
RIENZI.
THE CONQUEST OF GRENADA.
ERNEST MALTRAVERS, 1st Part.
ERNEST MALTRAVERS, 2d Part; (first printed as ALICE).
NIGHT AND MORNING.
ZANONI.
THE LAST OF THE BARONS.
*LUCRETIA.

So that out of a list of sixteen works of fiction (besides five Plays), the essays called "England and the English," and "The Student," a History of Athens, (and a volume or two of poems,*) the three to which I have prefixed an asterisk, are the *only* books in which felons or criminals have been made the heroes. In works professing to treat of human life in all its complexities, this is surely but a small proportion assigned to the express delineation of human crimes. And this list alone, to those who have read the works, is a sufficient answer to the charge—that it has been *my habit* as an author to select criminals and felons as my heroes. Five of the fictions I have cited are devoted to the historical illustrations of former times, with whatever images, fair or noble, the age might afford, or the progress of the narrative present; six to those circles of modern society, in which it was difficult to avoid the opposite reproach of dealing exclusively with the more polished or more frivolous classes, and forgetting, that beneath the surface of manners, grave and stern lessons are to be found —yes, even in the guilt and the woe, which are at work within the deeps; and two out of the number ("Zanoni" and "The Pilgrims of the Rhine,") are dedicated to fancies which may be called, if you please, too visionary and unreal, but are wholly remote from that grosser and more actual world of evil and sin, to which I am accused of having morbidly confined my invention, or monotonously directed my research.

In each and all of these, no doubt, there are (could they paint life without, or has any novelist attempted to do so?)—characters good and bad. But in none of my books (save the three before mentioned) has crime been made the leading agency, or a criminal the predominant character. In most of them, indeed, the fairer and gentler side of human nature, has been not unfavorably exhibited; in most of them, I believe, the characters that remain the more vividly clear in the remembrance of an impartial reader, will be associated with such qualities as dignify or endear our species.

To only *three* fictions out of *sixteen*, then, does the charge so indiscriminately made against all, shrink in its application;—viz., that "I have sought materials in crime, and heroes in criminals." We come, then, at once to a question, which common sense and universal authority ought long since to have decided—viz., "How far the delineation of crime is a legitimate object of fictitious composition."

It would seem from the hackneyed repetition of the same accusation against me, and the vehemence with which it is accompanied, that I had had the discredit to introduce into fiction some hideous innovation, opposed by the greatest writers or at variance with the usual privileges of my calling. But what is the fact? Has not the delineation of crime, in every age, been the more especial and chosen thesis of the greatest masters of art quoted to us as authorities and held up to us as models? The parricide of Œdipus, furnishes inspiration to the all-perfect and all-polished genius of Sophocles; Medea murders her children; Clytemnestra her husband, Orestes his mother; Phædra woos her step-son. I grant all that may be said as to differences of ancient manners and habits of thought; but these very same subjects have been readapted to the modern stage, adorned by the greatest geniuses of France, in an age when she especially prided herself on the purity of her drama, and the humanity of her audiences. They are enrolled amongst the masterpieces of Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire. They are incorporated with the drama of Italy. In England they furnish plots to the authors who were listened to as Reformers of the Stage from its ruder barbarities and grosser licence.

* Including a translation of Schiller. to which I could have had no reasonable inducement to devote the labor of more than two years, except that of rendering more familiar to my countrymen a collection of Poems, universally considered to create, upon the whole, moral impressions peculiarly pure and elevating.

Turn to the titles in the earlier editions of Shakespeare's plays, and they even seem to invite attention by the promise of the crimes they are to depict. What are we to say of the—

"Tragedie of Kynge Richard, conteyninge his treacherous plots againss his brother Clarence, and the murther of his innocent nephewes in the Tower; wyth the whole course of his detested life;" or of

"Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke, wyth his just revenge on the adulterous Kynge Claudius, and the poysoning of the Queen Gertrude."

Or, "The Tragedie of Macbeth, showing how, by treachery and manyfold murders, he obtained the crown of Scotland."

Or, "Othello the Moor of Venice, his deathe and strangling the fair Desdemona." *

I attach no weight to these titles themselves, of which Shakespeare is doubtless, innocent; but they certainly do not exaggerate the crimes which the plays depict. Crime, in fact, is the essential material of the Tragic Drama. Take crime for tragedy, and you annihilate tragedy itself. Whatever aims at the tragic effect, whether on the stage or in more sober narrative, cannot dispense with the evil which works to mischief—excites to terror—involves the innocent in its own ruin, and conduces to the tragic passions of our pity and our awe.† You may say at once, and literally of nearly all tragic writers "that they have sought in crimes their materials, and in criminals their heroes."

Mr. Burke has probably in much accounted for this sombre selection of character and subject, in those remarks, not the least subtle and profound, in his memorable treatise, wherein he demonstrates that, as power is a source of the sublime, so power to be sublime, must be suggestive of terror, and associated with attributes of destruction.

"Whatever," he says, "is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain or danger—that is to say, whatever is any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime." *

Again, "that power derives all its sublimity from terror with which it is generally accompanied, will appear evidently, from its effect in the very few cases in which it may be possible to strip a considerable degree of strength of its power to hurt,—when you do this, you spoil it of everthing sublime, and it immediately becomes contemptible." He proceeds to compare the ox, strong but innocent, and therefore the idea of which is not grand, with the bull, which, precisely because its strength is often destructive, has frequently a place in sublime description. "We have continually about us animals of a strength that is considerable, but not pernicious; amongst these we never look for the sublime. It comes upon us in the gloomy forest and in the howling wilderness—in the forms of the lion, the tiger, the panther. or rhinoceros." †

Without absolutely going to the extreme of the principle this eminent thinker has enforced, or asserting that strength, to be sublime, must be *necessarily* pernicious; it is undeniable at least, that the association of power with destruction is one of the most obvious

* To say nothing of "Titus Andronicus," which is, probably, not Shakespeare's, or his only in part, but which we admit into our collections with no fear of demoralizing weak minds, or poisoning the purity of youth by the successions of crimes and atrocities, murders, rapes—amputating hands, plucking forth tongues, hewing off heads—stabbing with a joke of "Weke, weke, so cries a pig"—cutting throats on the stage, while Lavinia between her stumps holds a bason for the blood, serving up to a mother her children baked in a pie, etc., etc. Why is not this play (no matter whose it be) to be banished from our collections? Because, here, time has brought healthful discernment; because, whatever the defective art which introduces such gratuitous horrors in "Titus Andrônicus," every one knows that they not *contaminate* the moral sense; the image of crime, made execrable, may pain and revolt us, but *for that very reason*, it does not allure or corrupt.

† Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than all definitions which have sought to limit the author's liberty of selection from criminal agencies and instruments. "The only circumstance," says one critic, "which elevates the crime into a subject for the poet or the dramatist, is the influence under which it is committed, the object which it is to attain, the nature of the impelling necessities which lead to it,—when these spring from causes not base or ignoble in themselves, when they come, for instance, from a combination of wrong not otherwise to be redressed, murder becomes a poetic subject; it is that which is dignified as a 'tragedy' and distinguished from mere felony." Words, signifying nothing! The crimes of Iago are base and ignoble in themselves—they come from "no combination of wrong not otherwise to be redressed;" neither do those of Richard III., nor those of Phædra, of Clytemnestra, of the daughters of Lear and the mother of Hamlet, and the wife of Macbeth.

* Burke on the "Sublime and Beautiful," Part I. sect, vii.

† Ib. Part II. sect. v.

sources of the sublime. And, as guilt in Man, when accompanied with intellect or daring, contains a power infinitely exceeding the brute force of the mere animal, so crime is the customary material for tragic art, and furnishes the tremendous instrument for moving the human heart by the agency of terror.

Other reasons might be adduced to show why crime has been made an essential element on the stage;—how it has afforded to the master of human nature his amplest scope for investigating the most subtle and hiden recesses of character and passion, unravelling the skein of intellectual error, and holding up to a thoughtless world those striking and solemn warnings in which the more direct morality of tragic composition may be said to consist. Perhaps the old Greek Platonist who eloquently defended Homer from the accusations of his master, has made some remarks on this part of our subject not unworty of attention.

"It appears to me," he says, "that whatever is tragical, monstrous, and out of the common course of nature in poetical fictions, excites the hearers in all imaginable ways to the investigation of the truth, attracts us to recondite knowledge, and does not suffer us through apparant probability to rest satisfied with superficial conceptions, but compels us to penetrate into the interior parts of fables, to explore the obscure intention of their authors," etc.*

Enough, then, has been said to show that crime is an admitted and necessary element of tragic fiction, an agency employed by the greatest poets, and to be vindicated by the plainest principles of their art; and so popularly is this understood, that *the very statue of the Tragic Muse is represented with the dagger in one hand, the poison bowl in the other.*

But then it is implied, if not openly contended, that, though the presentation of crime is allowable on the stage, it is to be condemned in a novel. Much is said about the "weak minds of circulating library readers"—"the young" and "impressionable," etc. As if there were no weak minds in the pit and the gallery of Drury-lane—as if only sages and stoics were to be found in the boxes—as if a dramatic audience were not, upon the whole, a far more miscellaneous class than that of subscribers to a circulating library, comprehending far lower degress of instruction, and a more general admixture, both of rank and of age *—as if, too, after all, literature were a kind of medicated farina, to be adapted with the daintiest nicety to the digestion of the weakly and diseased—as if any man of education and vigor, no matter whether he write a novel or a history, must not take it for granted, that he addresses readers of ordinary understanding and healthful comprehension! Is there, in fact, a book in the world that could ever have established a fame, if it had not mainly addressed itself to strong heads and clear intellects?

Much, too, is said of the example of former novelists, who were contented with exhibiting manners, and ridiculing folly—as if all prose fiction were to be narrowed into a single classification, or as if all grave purpose and tragic end were forbidden to the compositions of fiction, because they are divided into chapters, not compressed into acts! What is the fair source of terror in one composition may be as readily resorted to in another. What is free to the imagination, if put into five acts, does not become reprehensible, if employed in three volumes. Each, the narrative or the drama, is bound but by its own peculiar modes of relation or expression. And since, whatever our varieties of appeal to the passions, all are traceable to springs in the human mind, to which all who treat of the passions must apply—the narrator is not only privileged, but absolutely *constrained* to come to the same sources as the writer for the stage. Pause to consider how moral terror in tragic composition is obtained. The more you examine, the more you will find that moral † terror is never excited

* Taylor's translation of Proclus in the "Apology for the Fables of Homer." I prefer adopting his translation, though not so forcible as I could wish, to any attempt of my own. I have taken, however, the liberty of substituting for the word "unnatural," the paraphrase, "Out of the common course of nature," which is certainly the true meaning of Proclus.

* These poor circulating library readers are a little too superciliously treated. Say what we like about them, they still form the ordinary mass of the reading public, and comprehend all its varieties of intellect and instruction. They certainly cannot be said to exclude the refined and scholastic few, while they as certainly do not embrace the lowest orders in mental cultivation.

† I say moral terror, though even the physical terror caused by representations of bodily pain and danger can scarcely be artistically produced, without tracing it to moral evil, either in those who endure, or those who inflict it.

except by images of evil or punishment—by some destroying or dangerous agency. Look a little deeper, and you will find that there are only two kinds of this agency—the first, supernatural, such as Fate, a ghost, a witch, a fiend, an oracle, etc., in which the images from another world are summoned to exercise evil influence over this; the second agency is human crime. Search, I say, all tragedies, all fictions, and you will find that moral terror is never produced, but by some evil or destroying power, and that that power is never to be found, except in the two agencies I have named—viz., the supernatural or the criminal. Grant, then, what you cannot deny, that the narrator is in the exercise of his undoubted right, to attempt, if he can, to create the passion of terror, and you are compelled to grant him the only means by which he can effect his object—viz., the supernatural or the criminal. This is so evident a truth, that it would be unnecessary to say a word further on the subject, if it were not that the public are less familiarized to representations of guilt in the narrative fiction, than they were in the dramatic; and hence the comparative unfamiliarity has given a readier reception to shallow criticism of the romance, than common sense and daily custom would permit to be appled to the drama. But this only proves what is undeniable—viz., that the tragic prose romance is of very great recent date in literature, and has hitherto been sparingly cultivated. I believe that Richardson's "*Clarissa Harlowe*" was the first prose fiction, attaining permanent celebrity, that resorted for interest to the elements of tragedy. I need not say, that the plot of that work is founded on the progress and perpetration of a crime equally odious and base, conducted through scenes, abetted by characters, and consummated by means which the public would probably not permit to a writer in the present day. Yet, of Richardson, our great moralist could say with truth "that he taught the passions to move at the command of Virtue." The next tragic fiction that won fame from the public, was the "*Julia de Roubigné*" of the gentle-hearted Mackenzie. It closes in murder and suicide; and those who would fly at higher game than the living, may find, perhaps, something to say against the dead great author, who holds up as the ideal of chivalrous honor—high, though erring—the jealous assassin, who poisons his wife, and escapes by self-slaughter the penalties and shame of his deed. Yet who, amongst the true judges of literature, would deny to Mackenzie the praise he deserves as a writer of the purest intentions, and the mildest humanity? Not long after this, with some tragic purpose (though I do not include it amongst the fictions that we recognize as critically tragic), came the "*Zeluco*" of Moore—the gloomy portrait of a hero whom no moral sentiment ennobles, no genial impulse ever warms—but justifying the author by his aim to show in the maturer life of his hero the errors of early education, and the absorbing debasement of cultivated egotism. Nor has any man ventured to deny, that Dr. Moore in his writings has deserved the reputation for virtuous purpose, which, more than his genius, obtained him the favor of the public.

To these succeeded the truly tragic fiction of Godwin's "*Caleb Williams*," in which, as in "*Julia de Ronbigné*," a murderer is made the hero, with false humor for his tempter, while his remorse and his terror supply both analysis and incident. Yet, whatever may be said of Mr. Godwin's speculative opinions, on political and other subjects, all will admit that his aims were those of a philosopher, who sought, in his own way, the inculcation of morals. And while his more erroneous expositions of doctrine have sunk into oblivion, "Caleb Williams" lives yet, and will, perhaps, live while our language lasts, as a monuments of genius, on which are graven admonitions to error.

Thus it will be perceived, that in *all* the classic tragic prose fictions preceding our own age, criminals have afforded the prominent characters, and crime the essential material.

Since the production of those works, prose fiction has yet more extended its ancient limits.* It has entered with Goethe the domains of speculative thought; it has been en-

* Thus, indeed, a class of composition has arisen, for which, as yet we have no definite name; it corresponds not with our associations of the novel, nor yet with those of the romance. It does not belong precisely to either. We cannot justly call "Wilhelm Meister," or "Anastasius," "Undine" or "Picciola," "Atala" or "René," "Caleb Williams" and "Julia de Roubigné," either novels or romance. In England the word *fiction* has thus crept into use, for want of one less general and vague.

larged to almost boundless extent by the energies of Scott. But while that last-named and illustrious writer enriched the realms he had won with the stores of the historian, and from the mines of the poet—while, in mere form, more than any one, he relieved and animated the progress of narrative, and the delineation of character with the dialogue and action of the stage, of tragic fiction, rigidly so called, he has left but one signal master-piece, "*The Bride of Lammermoor.*"* In this, to create his effects of awe, though human evil is unquestionably introduced, he rather resorted to the old Greek instrumentality of *fate*—a means which (for an obvivious reason that I shall state hereafter) he could not have continued to employ if he had more generally directed his genius to tragic compositions. But, though the "*Bride of Lammermoor*" suffices to show that Scott's power in the sterner narrative surpassed all before him and since, the more habitual tendencies of his mind did not lead his choice to the regions over which awe and terror preside,

"Di quibus imperium est animarum umbræque silentes
Et Chaos et Phlegethon, loca nocte silentia late;"

still to the adventurer whom those regions invite, it is permitted to add—

"Sit mihi fas audita loqui: sit, numine vestro,
Pandere res altâ terrâ et caligine mersas."

The tragic fiction is conceived—it has taken growth—it may be destined, amidst the comparative neglect of the stage, to supply the lessons which the tragic drama has, for awhile, abandoned. Do not fetter its wanderings from free search after truth through the mazes of society, and amidst all the contrasts of nature. If it is to be a voice to the heart, an interpreter of the secrets of life,—you cannot withhold from it the broadest experience of the struggle between good and evil, happiness and woe.

"Hunc igitur terrorem animi, tenebrasque necesse est."

But I am told, somewhat more definitely and precisely, that though crimes of a lofty order, rendered high and solemn by ancient tradition, and clad in the pomp of history, are fitting subjects for fiction, the crimes which occur in our own day, and finish their career at the gallows or the hulks, are wholly to be banished from recital. "Such things may be: leave them to their own ignominy. Why elevate vulgar felons into heroes, and take us for interest to the Old Bailey?"

This, I believe, is a correct quotation from the kind of censure with which (stripped of its grosser personalities) I have had to contend. Once for all, I will seek to answer it as seriously as if it were an argument, not a declamation; a friendly remonstrance, not a hostile and heated assault. And while replying to my assailants in the Press, I address calmly and respectfully my arguments to those on whom attacks so frequently and passionately urged may have produced an impression which it pains me most deeply to think any work of mine should create on one honorable and impartial mind.

I have already, I trust, shown that the charge of '*habitually* selecting criminals for my themes is in itself untrue. I proceed now to the question, how far the crimes of our own days, the crimes of Tyburn and the Old Bailey, may be admissable to the licence of art in fiction, and conducive to the moral it should inculcate.

I will grant at once that for the purposes of poetry, high tragic effect may be more readily produced, and may usually create a grander or less distressful sentiment of awe, when it is sought in the ancient treasure-house of history or fable; and in some of my works I have reverently drawn from such elder and remoter sources. But one region of Art does not exclude the other. The past cannot monopolize the sorrows and crimes of ages. While we live, we ourselves become a past. And we are unquestionably warranted to consult the Book of Time, in the page which is spread before our eyes. Can we do so faithfully if we strike out all passages that pain or perplexes us? Can we give any fair idea of the record, if we confine all our extracts to what we instinctively approve and readily comprehend? No, every one concedes to me at once, that a writer is at liberty to search amidst the materials afforded to him in modern life, for the subjects

* Unless we admit, as perhaps we ought, the more mixed and less gloomy romance of "Kenilworth," in which I need not say, that all which is effected of terror is produced by the agency of guilt; in fact, wherever Walter Scott has produced terror without employing *supernatural* means, it will always and unavoidably, from the causes stated in the text, be found in connection with crime.

and characters of fiction. The comic writer takes fearlessly whatever in the errors and vices of mankind adapts itself to the comic result of exciting our ridicule, and moving our contempt:—

" Licet, semperque licebit
—— dicere de vitiis." *

"It ever has, and ever will be, lawful to speak of the vices," which it is the province of Comedy as of Satire to expose. The *Tartuffe* of Molière, the *Blifil* of Fielding, the *Squire Thornhill* of Goldsmith (a scoundrel, perhaps the vilest and the most sparingly punished in comic fiction), the whole spirit in Le Sage, the whole object in Swift, are uniformly directed to the exposure of the meaner and more vicious propensities of men. Folly and error, vice punished by ridicule, constitute the main materials of the comic writer, whether he employ them in a drama or a novel. Must we not grant to the writer who seeks for the elements of tragedy that exist in his own time, the equal licence to seek for the materials to which *tragedy* must apply? What are those materials but the passions and the crimes of men,—as, for comedy, the materials are drawn from the humors and the vices? Terror and compassion are the sources of the tragic writer's effects; the destructive or pernicious power of intellect corrupted into guilt, affords him the natural means of creating terror for the evil, and compassion for its victims. To say that the criminals he is thus compelled to employ as the agents of his plot, are unfit for his purpose because they may be classed amongst the prey of Newgate and the Old Bailey, is but to lay down the preposterous principle, that we must not extract tragedy from times in which laws are carried into effect; it is simply to say, that, because men in our day are transported and hanged for guilt, the guilt of our day is improper to analyze and depict.

All crimes now, if detected, must obtain the notoriety of the Old Bailey, or reap their desert in Newgate; and to contend that Newgate and the Old Bailey unfit them for the uses of the writer of fiction, is virtually to deprive him of the use of all crimes punished by modern law and enacted in the modern day: as if there were no warning to be drawn from sins that are not ennobled by ermine and purple; as if there were no terror in the condemned cell, no tragedy at the foot of the gallows! And yet how hackneyed is the aphorism, that the human heart, and the tragedy to be drawn from it, remain the same in every age! Unless, then, we deny altogether that we are to seek for the sources of tragedy amidst the times which we must necessarily know the best, amongst the characters on which the broadest and steadiest light can be cast, amidst the warnings the most immediately useful to us, we cannot reject to the writer of modern fiction the materials of modern tragedy, even though they *are* drawn from the records of the prison-house, and the judgments of the law. The materials must be open to choice, with certain stipulations as to the treatment, into which we shall enter later.

It has long, indeed, been the opinion of many minds the most thoughtfully bent upon the alliance between humanity and art, that we have too much neglected the deeper and graver characteristics of our own age; too much contented ourselves with surveys of the surface, delineations of manners, fashions, and foibles, and turned to the past for that sterner poetry which is not less sensibly to be found in the sorrows and the guilt of the life around us. Thus, towards the close of his life, Schiller, whom, at that time, no man can accuse of rash and unconsidered tamperings with the legitimate end of genius, meditated a drama that would seem least poetical to the shallow, but was intended to extract poetry from the very sources which it seems we are now forbidden to explore. His proposed subject was "The French Police;" and I need not say, that the conception could not fail to comprehend the evils, the abuses, and the crimes, of modern civilization.

Good men there are, no doubt, who would interdict altogether the presentation of actual crime as painful and revolting—as administering to a passion for diseased excitement; I respect their scruples. But, without here pausing to examine what weight can be attached to them, is the prohibition even possible? Crime meets us as a fact everywhere; you cannot open a newspaper, you cannot refer to statistics, you cannot mix in the ordinary world—but crime is forced daily and hourly

* Hor. Sat. 4. lib. 1.

on your notice. You must close up for purity and youth all history, sacred and profane: you must shut out from the calendar of life the tyrant and the martyr; you must seal up the fountains of literature, and silence the long succession of poets from Sophocles to Dante, from Dante to Shakespeare, from Shakespeare to the last song that has thrilled through the world—if you seek to exclude from the mind the dark certainties of guilt.

Even then you will fail. Man has but to live, to know that crime is the foe man must brave. Could you instruct him what he should resist and abhor, if you could leave him ignorant of its existence and its chastisement? You cannot, like the Emperor of China, live in a fancied succession of triumphs and security, and receive congratulations on the felecity of your reign and the impregnability of your dominion, while the enemy are blockading your ports and sailing up your rivers. The essential characteristic of this age and land is *publicity*. There exists a Press which bares at once to the universal eye every example of guilt that comes before a legal tribunal. In these very newspapers which would forbid a romance writer to depict crime with all that he can suggest to demonstrate its causes, portray its hideousness, insist on its inevitable doom,—are everywhere to be found the minutest details of guilt,—the meanest secrets of the prison-house are explored, turnkeys interrogated, and pages filled with descriptions of the personal appearance of the felon, his dress at the bar, his courage at the gallows. To find the true literature of Newgate and Tyburn, you have only to open the newspaper on your table. That reports *thus* send abroad to all quarters of a motley civilization, read aloud in the lowest alehouse, and in the vilest resorts of outcasts and thieves—the only literary food (as newspapers are) of the most uneducated classes;—that *such* may do harm, I am ready to confess, and this from the careless tone and the base detail—the obtrusion of a criminal notoriety unaccompanied by a single lesson—gorging the curiosity and familiarizing away the solemnity of guilt.* But how different this from a narrative of a writer of fiction, who presents no *single* portrature of crime to monopolize the morbid fancy—who contrasts it with images of purity and innocence, who analyzes the workings of the heart, and thus checks its progress to corruption—who accompanies the crime, as by its shadow, with the darkness of its own deformity—who exerts all the power he possesses to accumulate terrors round its consequences and chastisements—whose work by its literary treatment (if the author possess but ordinary scholarship), to say nothing of its mode of publication, is not destined to penetrate, like the newspaper, amongst the most ignorant and perverted—the accomplices and imitators of the guilty—but is almost necessarily confined to classes of a certain education, which would render the imitation as untempting as the guilt itself is abhorrent. The fiction supplies the very lessons the newspaper cannot give. If the reader doubt this, let him only compare the impressions made upon his mind by a crime brought before the courts of law with those produced by a crime which some imaginative writer has depicted;—I am greatly mistaken if he does not own at once, that the last are infinitely more grave, more forcible, and more enduring.

Analysis of the darker or coarser crimes of society is not intended to reform the criminals—then it does not reach. It is not as a curb to tyrants that "*William Tell*" is effective. It is not to reform an Appius that we express our sympathy with Virginius. It is not to breathe virtue into burglars that "*Jonathan Wild*" was composed, or to prevent men from poisoning their wives, that Mackenzie wrote his "*Julia de Roubigné.*" Limited, indeed, would be the moral uses of fiction, if confined to the peculiar idiosyncrasies of character it selects. Nor is it only by the catastrophe itself that fiction reaches the heart, but yet more by the mental dissection which it admits, that it corrects our errors, in developing their causes. It is by the tendencies to which terror or compassion in the tragic form, ridicule and contempt in the comic, are the agents, that we confirm social enthusiasm for virtue, and unite the reason with the passions in detestation of crime. And all this can be equally effected, whether we resort for materials to the past or to the present, to the vices of the great or to those of the mean. It is the treatment that

* This is the *necessity* of the newspaper press, rather than a *reproach* to it. That press but obeys the imperious demands for *publicity* which the age enforces. Its business is to deal with facts; and it can only partially and briefly convey the deductions which the author of a fiction writes volumes to explain.

ennobles, not the subject. Grant that the characters are what convention calls *low*—in birth, station, instruction; born in a cellar, dying on the gibbet, they are not one jot, for those reasons, made *necessarily* low to art. Art can, with Fielding, weave an epic from adventures with gamekeepers and barbers. Art can, with Goethe, convert into poetry the most lofty, the homely image of the girl condemned for infanticide, and confine the vast war between spirits and men, to the floors of her felon cell. Rightly has the most majestic of poets placed at the Portals of Dread, not those fiends which are the tempters of the great and deluders of the wise, but rather the demons of the ruder multitude, "Fear, and ill-advising Hunger, Labor, and shameful Want"—

"Et Metus, et malesuada Fames et turpis Egestas;
Terribiles visu formæ—Letumque, Laborque." *

To sum up, I think, then, we must allow—

1st. That crime, however great and heinous, is an admitted and necessary agency in tragic fiction, warranted by the employment of the greatest masters, and the sanction of all ages.

2ndly. That it is equally admissable in the narrative fiction as the dramatic.

3rdly. That we may seek for the materials of terror in crime, or *destructive power*, amidst the present as the past—that we are limited neither to particular periods, nor conventional gradations of rank—that wherever we find the facts that furnish the passions of terror,† and the characters that permit the analysis of motive to conduct, (the cause to the effect)—we are at full liberty to use them.

I said that we have a right to demand certain stipulations as to treatment and selection.

1stly. We have a right to demand that, whatever interest the author bids us take in the criminal, we should never, by any metaphysical sophistry, be seduced into admiration of the crime—that even where, as usually in the drama, the criminal is invested with attributes that enforce respect, or is induced to an offence at war with his general character by circumstance and temptation—still the crime itself should be shown clearly as a violation of eternal laws, and be condemned, not only by the result in the fiction, but the reason of the beholder. We are not forbidden to sympathize with Othello in his jealousy, nor to admire the nobleness which contrasts an infirmity ordinarily mean and egotistical; for we see that the crime to which it urges him entails its own direful punishment, and no compassion for the murderer lessons our horror of the murder.

2ndly. The crimes depicted should not be of a nature to lead us through licentious scenes, nor accompanied with descriptions that appeal dangerously to the senses. There is one class of evil which shocks and revolts us—there is another class of evil to which the most perilous ally is in our own nature. There is nothing to corrupt us in the delineation of murder and violent wrong; our instincts recoil at once from the idea of imitation. There may be much to corrupt us in the delineation of an adulterous love, though the moral it is meant to convey may, in itself, he excellent. And, therefore, it is safest not to make prominent or minutely to detail crimes of a nature which less openly revolts us than insidiously allures.*

3rdly. In dealing especially with the coarser and more violent crimes least idealized by remote tradition, least dignified by history above vulgar associations, the author is bound to have some object in view, belonging to the purer and more thoughtful principles of art, to which the means he employs are subordinate and conducive. If in "*Jonathan Wild*," Fielding takes us almost solely among thieves and pickpockets, it is not merely, and objectively, as it were, to familiarize us with their principles and habits. In describing the actual meanness, he is aiming his satire at false greatness. It is not because a man is a felon and a criminal that *therefore* he furnishes a fitting theme for the drama or the narrative. I guard myself especially against appearing

* Virg. Æn. vi. 276, 277.

† I should apologize for the fatiguing repetition of the word *terror* throughout the inquiry. But I could not avoid it without obscurity and circumlocution. I must make the same excuse for the repetition of the word *art*.

* And this principle of treatment, be it observed, holds as good in the delineation of virtue as in the exhibition of guilt. "Pamela," for instance, is intended to celebrate the triumph of virtue in a woman,—"Caleb Williams" depicts the guilty fall of a man. Yet which of the two fictions would a father prefer to trust to his children? The design of Richardson is eminently virtuous, but, by an error in art, the treatment obtrudes scenes and suggests ideas of very questionable safety.

to sanction so preposterous a conclusion. But if there be anything so peculiar in his guilt, or the circumstances attending it, as to afford fair scope for artistic purpose, suggest useful reflections, or inculcate a salutary lesson,—*then* it is, not because he is a criminal or felon, that he becomes an unfit instrument for those ends to which, indeed (as we have seen), the agency of crime is essential. If, therefore, the author make use of the actual and more violent guilt that forms one element of the society around us—we have a right to expect that it will be introduced, not in wanton levity, but for some thoughtful purpose—tending (to the best of his judgment) to illustrate some serviceable truth.

These, I believe, are the main restrictions which we must impose upon the liberty of the author, in granting him all the privileged resources of his art.

I venture to assert, that by these restrictions I have been bound. Throwing myself on the indulgence of the candid for an egotism rendered necessary by the direct personality of the attacks, and without which the reader must be sensible that these remarks would be desultory and incomplete; and assuming merely, that the three works I am called upon to defend have been read by those to whom I address myself, I proceed to challenge for them the severest application the impartial can bestow, of the rules I have laid down for the proprieties of treatment.

And first, as to "*Paul Clifford*." * The object of "Paul Clifford" ought to be sufficiently apparent. It was written at a time when capital punishment was still in this country indiscriminately impolitic and severe—when society was not employed, as it is virtuously now, in seeking to reform the circumstances which engender crime in the masses; but was content with punishing by severity the offences it had in much caused by neglect. To quote from the short preface to the edition of 1840, it was my design, therefore, "to draw attention to two errors in our penal institutions—viz, a vicious prison discipline, and a sanguinary criminal code—the habit of first corrupting the boy by the very punishment that ought to redeem him, and then hanging the man on the first occasion, as the easiest way of getting rid of our own blunders;" it was "a satire on the short cut established between the house of correction and the condemned cell."

Paul Clifford is thus represented as one of the very numerous class to which all practical philanthropists are now inviting our attention; exposed in boyhood to the contagion of evil companionship—sent to prison for an offence he does not commit—escaping from it by the dexterity of one of those confirmed rogues, with whom a prison brings him into familiar association—and afterwards, almost necessarily driven for a livelihood into defiance of the Law, which had already expelled him from its pale. Paul Clifford offends, and he is punished—he is an exile for ever from his country; but as his offence is extenuated by circumstances—as society in itself is in some measure a partaker of it—as some good qualities, that show him capable of reform, belong to his character, and as he has been led into none of the darker crimes of cruelty, revenge, and bloodshed—so he is not punished to the extent of the gallows. He is allowed to work out his redemption by repentance and atonement. In all this, the Novelist does but second the improved disposition of Society itself. He does but advocate in a fiction the principles which are now enlightening our journals and ameliorating our laws.

To guard against danger of imitation by the modern invaders of property (if such a book could ever reach them), Paul Clifford is not represented—as certain parties choose unblushingly to assert—as a mere pickpocket and thief—he is taken out of the range of existing subjects for the Old Bailey. His offence is that of the obsolete, and now impossible nature, which characterized what was satirically called the "Gentleman Highwayman;" and has passed away from our well-regulated roads and enclosed commons as entirely as the band of Robin Hood has passed from the glades of Sherwood. It can now be imitated no more than adventurous youth can imitate the *Locksley* and the *Rob Roy* of Walter Scott. And with quite as much justice in the last-cited novel may its great and healthful author be accused of exalting a robber into a hero, and weaving round him a dangerous and immoral interest, as the humbler writer, now put upon his defence, of such a

* The real hero of this book is perhaps rather William Brandon than his son; but I take the responsibility created by the title selected.

design in the moonlight rides of Paul Clifford, the Highwayman.* If exception be taken to the mere lowness of scenes and characters occasionally introduced in the book, but by no means forming the principal part of it, I may observe, that as they contain nothing obscene or licentious, nothing to incite or inflame, and are not introduced for themselves, but for satire upon the real vulgarity often found beneath the mere conventional polish they travesty or burlesque,—so whatever may be said against such an introduction on the score of art, it is free, at least, from all tendency to corrupt. And in this, since I cannot claim the merit of originality, I have at least the sanction of authorities the most respected—not only in the disputed morality of the "*Beggars' Opera*," or the nobler precedent of "*Jonathan Wild*"—but in the "*Beggar's Bush*" of Beaumont and Fletcher, which does not disdain to put slang into verse—in the "*Guzman D'Alfarache*" of Le Sage—in the "*Sharper*" of Quevedo—and in the innumerable scenes in what is called "low life," which are never cited in reproach of our greatest novelists.

I think, therefore, that I may fairly dismiss "*Paul Clifford*" to the acquittal of any impartial jury upon the capital charges that without evidence and against precedent, have been laid to its charge.

In "*Eugene Aram*" the case was wholly different, demanding graver treatment and more awful chastisement; here, at least, there was no vulgar offender, nor here was there any victim to the errors and neglect of society. Here was one of those startling phenomena in human conduct which had arrested the attention of the historian, claimed the muse of the Poet, which had been more than the nine days' wonder in the age in which it had occurred, and remained in the record and memories of men, as containing the problems, and exciting the terror, of a completed tragedy in itself. The picture of a laborious and self-taught student, apparently of a life the most blameless, a character the most humane, locking within his conscience the secret of a dark and inexplicable crime, not to be explained by intelligible motives—attributed to what seemed essentially opposite to his nature and pursuits, (viz. the mean desire of gain)—brought to light after many years, by a series of circumstances, regular and coherent as the links in a Drama, is surely not to be classed amidst the vulgar and commonplace offences of Newgate records; and if ever crime be admissible in fiction, I confess that I know of few within that wide history in which it finds its place, more set apart and marked out for tragic analysis and delineation. Not in the various subjects it has been my fortune to select, though they have dealt with larger and more complicated interests of mankind; not in Pliny's fearful account of the flaming mountain and buried city; not in the failing attempt of Rienzi to resuscitate the corpse of Roman grandeur, recorded in the annals of Italy; not in the wild and gloomy struggle in which our own Chroniclers have tracked, amidst the Wars of the Roses, the sanguinary transition from the feudal to the social age, can I recognize a theme more adapted to Tragic purposes than the image of that solitary mind, silent and bowed down beneath the weight of its solitary crime. I was not singular in my belief that this subject was appropriate to the purposes to which I presumed to apply it. Mr. Godwin assured me that he had often meditated a fiction, of which Eugene Aram was to be the hero; and I am informed by a high and indisputable authority,* that Sir Walter Scott expressed his surprise that a crime so peculiarly adapted to tragedy or romance, had been so long untreated by either.

I venture, then, to assume that the choice of my subject was sufficiently legitimate. And I addressed myself to its execution with an earnest study neither to palliate the offence, nor diminish the terror of the chastisement. Here, unlike the milder guilt of Paul Clifford, the author was not to imply reform to society, nor open in this world atonement and pardon to the criminal. As it would have been wholly in vain to disguise, by mean tamperings with art and truth, the ordinary habits of life and attributes of character, which all

* Rob Roy defies the law, plunders the traveller, ravages the border, spares not life, if in his way, and is represented on the whole as an amiable and gallant character, and dismissed without punishment, to the doubtful approbation of the reader. In all this the assailers of "Paul Clifford" see nothing to call for the charge of raising robbers into heroes, or bestowing interest upon criminals. And they are right. Let them be but consistent. If this miserable jargon is to be employed at all, let them use it impartially.

* Our distinguished diplomatist, Sir Hamilton Seymour.

record and remembrance ascribed to Eugene Aram, as it would have defeated every end of the moral inculcated by his guilt, to portray in the caricature of the murderer of melodrame, a man immersed in study, of whom it was noted that he turned aside from the worm in his path,* so I have allowed to him whatever contrasts with his inexpiable crime have been recorded on sufficient authority. But I have invariably taken care that the crime itself should stand stripped of every sophistry, and be hideous to the perpetrator as well as to the world. Allowing all by which attention to his biography may explain the tremendous paradox of fearful guilt in a man aspiring after knowledge and not generally inhumane—allowing that the crime came upon him in the partial insanity, produced by the combining circumstances of a brain overwrought by intense study, disturbed by an excited imagination. and the fumes of a momentary disease of the reasoning faculty, consumed by the desire of knowledge, unwholesome and morbid, because coveted as an end, not a means added to the other physical causes of mental aberration—to be found in loneliness, and want verging upon famine;—all these which a biographer may suppose to have conspired to his crime, have never been used by the novelist as excuses for its enormity, nor indeed, less they should *seem* as excuses, have they ever been clearly presented to the view. The moral consisted in showing more than the mere legal punishment at the close. It was to show how the consciousness of the deed was to exclude whatever humanity of character preceded and belied it from all active exercise —all social confidence; how the knowledge of the bar between the minds of others and his own, deprived the criminal of all motive to ambition, and blighted knowledge of all fruit: Miserable in his affections, barren in his intellect—clinging to solitude, yet accursed in it —dreading as a danger the fame he had once coveted—obscure in pite of learning, hopeless in spite of love, fruitless and joyless in his life, calamitous and shameful in his end;—surely such is no palliative of crime, no dalliance and toying with the grimness of evil! And surely, to any ordinary comprehension, any candid mind, such is the moral conveyed by the fiction of "Eugene Aram!"

I come now to the last of the three works of which I have undertaken the defence. But before I speak of the object really intended in the romance of "Lucretia," I must clear up a very signal and general mistake on the part of my critics. In the preface to "Lucretia," it will be observed that I speak much of an intention I had long entertained of depicting the influences of money upon modern civilization, and exposing what I held as a vice of the day, in impatience or dislike to the slow returns of legitimate toil, whether in pecuniary speculation or intellectual ambition. And upon this, with the exception of two or three reviewers, there has been an outcry of simultaneous discovery that the design announced in the preface was not borne out in the execution of the book; and accordingly that the book was a failure, because the author had not accurately defined what the book was intended to convey. If these gentlemen will do me the favor to correct in themselves that 'impatience' which I took the liberty to denounce, and look with a little less haste at that unfortunate preface, they will, perhaps, convince themselves that I never professed "Lucretia" to be the fulfilment or carrying out of the purpose which I said I had once meditated in an *earlier* design. What I stated, I thought with sufficient distinctness, was, that when I half implied my farewell to the character of a novelist, I had imagined that an attempt to illustrate the influences of money might be best worked out upon the stage; that that design, with which I wished to couple some exposition of the popular vice of impatience, I afterwards thought I could best treat in a novel; but that while meditating such a conception, I became acquainted with the lives of two criminals, so remarkabe as to engage my examination and analysis; and, that this *second* design had supplanted the first, I thought I had made abundantly clear by the following remarks:—

"I could not resist the temptation of reducing to a tale the materials (viz., the lives and letters of the said two criminals) which had so engrossed my interest and tasked my inquiries; and, in this attempt, various *incidental* opportunities have occurred, if not completely carrying out, still of incidentally illustrating

* The Rev. Mr. Hinton said "he used frequently to observe Aram, when walking in the garden, stoop down to remove a snail or a worm from the path."

my *earlier* design." And a few lines farther, I expressly observe, "that the delineation of the darker crime formed the *staple* of my narrative," proceeding to remark, that in that delineation "the less obvious moral must be found in those uses to which poets have applied the portraiture of gigantic crime."

Therefore, any impartial person will perceive at once, that even at the commencement of my book its object has been, to say the least, carelessly misrepresented;—that what made the purpose of an earlier and suspended design, only furnised incidental illustration to the present—and that that illustration was the less noticeable in the agencies of the greater crime which formed the staple of the narrative, and in which another moral must necessarily be sought.

"The incidental opportunities" to which I limited my engagement, occur chiefly in the minor agents of the fiction. William Mainwaring with a competent fortune, and abilities calculated, with steady perseverance, to gratify ambition by an honorable repute, finds his tempter in the undue desire of gain, and the rash impatience for distinction. Without these enemies in his own breast, Lucretia had been powerless against him. On the other hand, Walter Ardworth, represented as honest in his impulse and generous in his sympathies, loses character for want of due regard to the prudence in preserving, which is the counter error to greed in acquiring; and too impatient, even in the social and generous tendencies which attach him to liberty as the advancement of his species—to study the application of theory to practice, sinks into a shallow declaimer, as useless to his cause, as unprofitable to himself. In contrast to both these, meant to unite the talents of the one with the sympathies of the other, is sketched in outline the character of John Ardworth—energetic but not rash—uncovetous, but self-denying—valuing money at its just standard, and looking to steadfast labor as the surest means of success. Incidentally (if only incidentally) the secret and sinister influences of money upon conduct, are also suggested in the mechanical avarice of Beck—the habitual degradation of Grabman—*incidentally* they even apply to the career of the two arch criminals themselves—covetousness and impatience are twin elements in the grasping, hollow, character of the scoundrel, Varney, "alieni appetns, sui profusus," with the cold heart of the miser—the rank lusts of the spendthrift. Impatience to attain to the end, which her selfish love for Mainwaring suggests, is the first cause of those criminal desires in Lucretia, which are the germs of her criminal deeds, and by which she first permits herself to encourage the contemplation of a human life as an obstacle in her way. And with all her constitutional indifference to money in itself, so much is money mixed up with men's fellest, as their noblest designs, that it is for the coveted inheritance of her son, for the power money can bestow, that her crowning and most hideous guilt is principally conceived and accomplished. If it be said that these are not the patent and obvious influences of money, I reply that, even in my earlier design, such indirect influences were not those which I stated it to be my intention to depict. The broad characteristics, whether of a *Harpagon*, a *Beverley* or an *Heir of Lynn*, have been sufficiently portrayed. I spoke emphatically of a former design to trace rather "the *strange and secret* ways in which that arch civilizer, familiarly called money, insinuates itself into our thoughts and motives, our hearts and actions." But all I professed in *this* work, was to take advantage of incidental opportunities of suggesting such lessons—and I have now shown, that I have fulfilled my intention to the extent of my engagement.

The deeper, sterner, and more tragical design to be found in the crimes that form the staple of the narrative, I did not detail in my preface, partly because I trusted it might be sufficiently obvious to the more intelligent reader, partly because it could not have been explained without impertinently forestalling the plot, and could not well have been understood till the volumes were closed, and the mind could look back upon the whole. I was mistaken, it seems, in my first reason for silence, and I have no longer the motive for the second. Here let me pause for a moment, and endeavor to remove from the mind of the reader the principal obstacle, I apprehend in the way of his candid judgment.

Colley Cibber tells us in his amusing autobiography, that in his time actors did not like to represent the parts of villains, "lest in some sort they should be confounded with the persons represented," and, indeed, that the

audience themselves "were shy of giving applause to Iago, lest they should be loooked on as abettors of the wickedness in view." Nay, "the Master of the Revels, who then licensed plays for the stage, would strike out whole scenes, where a vicious and immoral character was introduced, however visibly it were shown that it was to be afterwards punished or reformed." Once, much to poor Colley's dismay, this wise Master of the Revels struck out the whole of the first act of Richard III., "without leaving a line of it." In vain was the prayer, "for a speech or two, that the other four acts might limp on with a little less absurdity." The Master of the Revels was obdurate, "and so the play was positively acted for some years without the first act at all!"

Now something, perhaps, of this prejudice still exists in the public; when the author has presented some character of villainy to their eyes, perhaps they are still shy of their applause, "lest they be looked upon as abettors of the wickedncss described." Nay, perhaps the more life-like and truthful the villainy, the greater the dread of being entrapped into owning the faithful colors of the author, and the easier, by some artful foe in the house, they may be led into venting on the writer some part of the resentment which he designedly raised against his creations. This is like beheading Dr. Guillotine by the very machine he intended, out of the least truculent motives, for the more artistic decapitation of felons. I must entreat, however, the reader to lay aside that prejudice which, however amiable, is certainly unjust, and dissociate entirely the idea of what is due to the author, from the sense of what is due to the characters whom the author has purposely submitted to abhorrence. He does not the less hate the crimes, because he has sought, in presenting, to deduce from them what warnings they may convey: and he is about now more clearly to explain what moral, perhaps not unprofitable, may come, clear and fair, from the guilt it has shocked the good to behold.

When the chief materials for the gloomier part of this tale were submitted to me, in the lives, writings, and correspondence of the two persons represented under the names of Lucretia and Varney, that which made upon me the deepest and most startling impression was the degree of intellectual cultivation which accompanied and heightened their ineffable guilt. We are so accustomed to consider crime the hideous offspring of ignorance, that when we find it accompanied by much literary instruction, it startles the wonder of the indifferent, and rouses the inquiry of those who love to explore the workings of the human mind.

The person whose guilt is certainly not exaggerated in Varney, was an artist, a musician, a critic, and a writer of liveliness and versatility. In his correspondence, he appears to have skimmed the surface of a large and various reading—speaks familiarly of Kant, and hints at a translation of Schelling. In the correspondence of the original from whom is drawn the Lucretia of the fiction, are apparent a cultivation more elaborate, and faculties more formidable. These were facts not to be got over. Some lesson, like all facts, they must convey. And I searched for that lesson as a physician may watch some fearful disease, so rare indeed in itself, that his deductions might never be applied to one precisely similar, but which, if comprehended and detailed, might add to the general stores of pathology, and unravel some of the more mysterious complications of the human frame. It is ever painful to believe in the union of mental cultivation with cruel propensities or moral depravity; still, the fact of such a union rises out from every page in the varying chronicles of history. Sometimes the most ruthless exterminator is found in one who has armed himself against his kind, with all the learning of his age; and the accomplishments of a woman have been interwoven with the ferocities of a savage.

The most sanguinary tyrant of ancient Greece so cultivated the reasoning faculties he perverted, as to induce the popular error to class him amongst the sages: Nero had stored his cruel and sensual mind with the very accomplishments supposed most to humanize and soften; everything that his time could teach him, refined into system the atrocities of Cæsar Borgia; Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, surpassed the most ruthless in an age of barbarity; yet "with his head," say the chroniclers, "fell half the scholarship of England;" Richard the Third brought to the fierce, unlettered struggles of his day the arts of Italy and the learning of Utrecht. Happily, the moral to

be drawn from these colossal criminals is, the utter failure of the very intellect so perverted and misused. And as, whatever our inclination to the contrary, we cannot deny that in private individuals the same discordant and dismal union of cultivated intellect and corrupted conscience does sometimes, though rarely, exist, let us deduce from biography and fiction the same salutary truth that consoles us in history. History makes clear the fact and loud the warning. Is it wrong for fiction, that history of the inner heart, to do the same? To show the nothingness and impotence of intellect, even in the attainment of its own intellectual aims, when it once admits crime as its agency —to show how useless, nay, pernicious, to the guilty possessor is the very mental power he thus desecrates and perverts—to show that goodness and genial affection are essential to the triumph and fruitfulness of all that mind may plot for, and force would command—for these lessons, it might be as permissible to dive into the guilt of Lucretia as into that of the Prince of Valentinois—and expose in the humbler villain of our own day the same attributes of character, the same alliance of the sensual and the cruel, the effeminate and unsparing, which may startle us in the imperial poisoner and parricide of old. It is only "the property-man" of the stage that sees grandeur but in the crown or the toga. Strip off the externals. We have a right to compare men with men.

I wished, then, to show the fate of intelligence abused to the ends of guilt. Somewhat of this had already been shadowed out, as I have said, in the tale of "Eugene Aram." I sought now to follow the inquiry it suggested into wider tracks, and into yet more comprehensive results. With two out of the three great divisions of human intelligence, facts supplied me; I drew from invention for the third.

In Dalibard, the intention was to portray the wary, calculating, and laborious intellect, which, rightly directed, leads to science; in Varney, the versatile, lively, impressionable fancy, which, purified and guided, may conduct to art; in Lucretia, the energy and active will, which, nobly stimulated and trained, may lead to eminence and success in the outward concerns of life.

All these intellects had but to be honest to succeed. Each of these intellects divorces itself early from all interests but its own. Each works and plots solely for objects identified with itself. Each admits crime for its agency; and from that moment all three, so essentially distinct, are merged in one common infamy and degradation—from that moment, every effort of the intellect itself becomes a failure; and time and justice, and the truth of things, crush them beneath the Alps they themselves have created. In the minutiæ of treatment, all ground for such mischief, as the most cautious might apprehend, in instructing depravity (if depravity such a book should ever reach), as to the materials at its command, has been so studiously avoided, that the reader will perceive the uniform care with the possible attainment of those materials have been placed out of the reach of the guilty; the temporary success that attends the poisons employed by the murderers is made to depend solely on their selection of no drug to be procured by common-place villany—in the secrets of chemical compounds, which at no shop could be purchased, of which no hint is conveyed, except that only by chemistry, the most erudite and skilful, they can possibly be combined. Rather than incur, however innocently, the possibility of supplying to one "morbid idiosyncrasy" the agencies at the service of these modern Borgias, I have willingly invited the much more plausible accusation of far-fetched and impracticable devices, if ever existing, wholly lost to the invention, wholly out of the command, of guilt in the age of which we live.

I said in my preface that the originals from whom I had drawn had as little as imagination can conceive to redeem their guilt. And this, I trust, I have sternly kept in view. I have never once held them up to compassion. I have left them that degree of ability which was justified by facts; not elevated into the genius, with which, as in history, we find such criminality is not accompanied. It has been even reproached to me, that I have not given them genius, and that all their cunning, instruction, or audacity avails them not for worldly success. Why, that was precisely one truth that I aimed at! The Borgias and the Richards fall short of genius, but have ability sufficient to have won them some distinction in good, and powerful only for destruction when ap-

plied to evil. I have never suffered ability so debased to pass into the command of admiration—I have shown how impotent it was to lessen one atom of our detestation, though sufficient, (if such art be in the writer), to accompany detestation with terror. Pressed into the service of Death, Mind itself grows grim and hateful as the king that it serves.

> "Black it stands as Night,
> Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
> And shakes a deadly dart!"

These Children of Night, by the paths they themselves have chosen, are conducted to catastrophes, which, while punishing them the most in the sin each had most favored, was that which each (could the soul have foreseen it) would have regarded as the most fearful and appalling. Dalibard, the coward and the calculator, shrinking from all physical danger, and using his holiest relationships but as tools to his purpose, is betrayed at the hearth he had desecrated, and butchered by the dull ruffian he had duped. Varney, who had prostituted the perfection of his physical senses to their vilest gratifications, luxurious amidst his infamy, effeminate in despite of his animal audacity, is sentenced to the coarsest of hardships, the vilest of labor, chained to the most loathesome of malefactors, doomed to all that the senses, most pampered, would shudder from the most, all that the fancy, so perverted, could body forth of horror and despair. Lucretia, who had made on earth no god but the intellect—is cursed in the intellect—smitten down below the brutes, but with the consciousness of the mortal—retaining, amidst the ruins of all the past, only the image of her crime, standing face to face with it, as a visible thing.—Surely these punishments are as appalling and as appropriate to the guilt as poetic justice can command! And beside them the gibbet is mercy and reprieve.

The delineation, then, of these three arch criminals, was not the indulgence of any idle or morbid affection for the contemplation of guilt in itself, it was but undertaken for an honest and serious purpose. And a thoughtful reader will perceive, that even the more subordinate images of evil introduced, were in accordance with one earnest and elaborate design. The dull and villainous brutality of the grave-stealer, for instance, forms no superfluous figure on the gloomy canvas, nor, in chaining that sordid ruffian to the more pampered miscreant, is the idea of befitting punishment to the last, alone enforced. But in confounding in one lowest abyss of human degradation, the man in whom no nobler faculty has ever been awakened, and the man to whom all falculties sufficing for the perception of good have been given, and by whom they have been voluntarily perverted to odious and execrable ends, it was sought to convey a truth, suggestive of no unprofitable reflections.

That wise man, Dr. Slop, in discussing Yorick's Sermon, contends that the Roman Catholic Sermons "have greatly the advantage, that they never introduce any character below a patriarch, or a patriarch's wife, or a martyr, or a saint. 'There are some very bad characters in this, however,' said my father, 'and I do not think the sermon is a jot the worse for 'em.'"

Perhaps Mr. Shandy in this was a better judge than Dr. Slop.

I contend, then, and I think that I have proved, that the design of this book of the "Children of Night," was conformable to the laws of fiction and the truths of history; that the moral it enforces is serious and impressive; not the less for the pain it bequeaths; that it can but deepen the horror of guilt, and the dread of its consequences; that it can but preach wholesome lessons to the intellect, and awaken lively self-examination in the heart; and that there is not a single attempt to create for the criminals any interest save that of terror and suspense in their deeds,* or to pervert for one instant the channels of sympathy from their legitimate source.

I have been told, indeed, that, though these dark social phenomena may exist, they are too peculiar, too rare, for more or artistical treatment. Perhaps, such critics would never have made the charge had they been aware of the compliments it implies. Every man really a critic in art, knows that rare truths are more important than frequent ones. "The teaching of Nature," says one who has thoroughly mastered the subject he treats of, "is as varied

* By a strange inconsistency, the very parties that reproached me for blending some redeeming good qualities with the offences of Paul Clifford and the crime of Eugene Aram, reproach me for the opposite fault of leaving the wickedness of Varney and Lucretia utterly unredeemed.

and infinite as it is constant, and the duty of the painter is to watch for every one of her lessons, and to give (for human life can admit of nothing more) those in which she has manifested each of her principles in the most striking and peculiar way. The rarer his phenomena, the more valuable his works will be." Not, indeed, that we must delineate the rare alone. "Both the frequent and the rare are parts of the same great system; to give either exclusively is imperfect truth."

If these "Children of Night" are happily rare deviations from the order established below, they do not occupy the whole of my canvas, and they are surrounded with images more bright, and I believe, more frequent. Is there nothing innocent in Helen? nothing frank and pure in the youth of Percy? nothing honest and upright in John Ardworth? nothing benevolent in Fielden? nothing amiable in the genial Sir Miles St. John? And as the general disposition and tendencies of an author are not to be judged by one work alone, so I may venture to invite those who have really read me, to add to the contrast of the gloom and guilt depicted in "*Lucretia*," whatever of gentler fancies they may remember in the "*Pilgrims of the Rhine*," of attempts to symbolize the beauty of Art in the romance of "*Zanoni*," or to embody the steadfast virtue of practical life in the Mordaunt "*The Disowned*." And if they will permit their thoughts to wander for a moment through the whole range of my writings, they will own at least that, whatever their faults, they are not to be accused of sameness in the characters, nor of monotony in treatment.

"*Lucretia*," I confess to be a painful book; all delineation of fearful crime, and the ruin it entails, must necessarily be so. If, in its treatment, I have overstepped the true limits of terror, that may be an error in *art*, but not one, (be it remembered and distinguished), in *moral* tendency and design.*

There is this distinction between the old tragedy and the new. With the Greek, Fate was the main instrument of woe and crime;—so with the Greek, there was little need of mental analysis—little need to show from what errors of his own, man suffered and sinned. Fate stalked across his way or stood upon his hearth—his fell and irresistible foe. An oracle declared he should murder, a god led his steps to his doom. But, with us, guilt or woe has its source in ourselves. Our conscience is our oracle, our deeds shape our fate. And though, in a few rare instances, modern writers have still had recourse to the iron deity of old, it is obvious that unless the instrumentality of a power which we cannot influence and control be most sparingly and cautiously employed, we should seem to sanction the dangerous principle that we are the passive and unconscious tools, not the active and reasoning contrivers, of the evil that conducts us to the abyss. Hence arises the imperious necessity, for those who resort to the sources of tragedy, and trace from them the channels of woe or guilt—to search narrowly and patiently (often, it may be, with distaste to themselves) into all that is dark and hidden in the mechanism of the mind for the causes of evil, and the links between the thought and the sin. And thus in proportion to the crime they depict, and the destruction it effects, must be the gloom of the impression they create, and the degree of pain they inflict. If, in the narrative of these "Children of Night,"—if, as some assert, "its horror is burlesque," and its treatment "excites rather ridicule than awe,"—if, as I am assured by others, it is "dulness upon dulness," "nothing graphic in the pictures," "nothing striking in the incidents,"—then, though its moral cannot be pernicious, I have certainly failed to render it instructive. But if it bequeaths (as the facts on which it is founded should enable it to do) the effect of tragedy thoroughly in earnest—a sensation of terror that oppresses the more from the conviction that reality lies beneath the fiction—a relief in the heartfelt detestation of the crime from which the terror proceeds—a dread of "the destructive power" which is the essence of the hateful combination between intellect and guilt, and a desire to rush for escape to the cheerful atmosphere of good, —then does this book come, at least, within the allotted limits of the art that is built upon terror, and sanctions its connection with pain and distress,* and then does it attain to those

* In the present edition it will be seen that the author has endeavored by an alteration in the catastrophe, to lighten the pain which the earlier cast of the work had produced.

* In quoting the following passage, it is not with the presumption of advancing any claim to the high at-

moral effects which are produced by the means of the passions.

The moral conveyed in all works of the imagination, is in part distinct and immediate, in part also it is untraceable, distant and indirect. And this latter part is perhaps the most really valuable and efficient. Ask any thoughtful and educated man, what works have produced the most marked and recognized influence on his conduct, and I believe he will never name a fiction or a poem. Next, and unspeakably subordinate, to the more sacred monitors whose counsel he reverently obeys—he will tell us, perhaps of some homely treatise, or some artless biography. But ask that man to dissociate from the general influences on his conduct, whatever he may have learned from the pages of poetry and fiction, and he will doubtless tell you it is impossible. He will acknowledge how much, yet how insensibly, they have strengtened his moral impressions—how much they have suggested reflections that brighten his perceptions of truths—how much they have added to that general knowledge of the heart which has set emotion on its guard, and animated into generous passion his love for the noble and the good—his scorn for the sordid and the evil. And this it is, I presume, that some writer intended to express when he finely asked, "Who amongst us now living can tell what he would have been if Shakspeare had never existed?"

None of my readers will ever, I know, have to resist one temptaton to a villainy, a millionth part so hateful as that described in "Lucretia" as a monstrous phenomenon. But in the struggles of life, the minor seductions of evil are often repelled by the lively horror derived from the doom which poet or tale-teller has assigned to concessions to the greater. If this were not so, the gigantic and unfamiliar crimes depicted on the heroic stage, would be but idle exaggerations. Who amongst the audience that listen to "Macbeth" will have to wade through blood to a throne, yet who may not have some selfish object his ambition would promote, and be tempted by the meaner "juggles of the fiend?" In the picture of a crime dwells the warning to an error. Divers and specious are the allurements to attain to ends coveted by the intellect through means more or less disapproved by the conscience: and not unsalutary may be the true lesson to be derived from "Lucretia" if the impressions it bequeaths though vague and unalyzed, serve to quicken the instantaneous conviction that all which defiles the conscience defeats and defrauds the intellect.

"The first step passed, compels us on to more,
And guilt proves *fate*, which was but *choice* before."

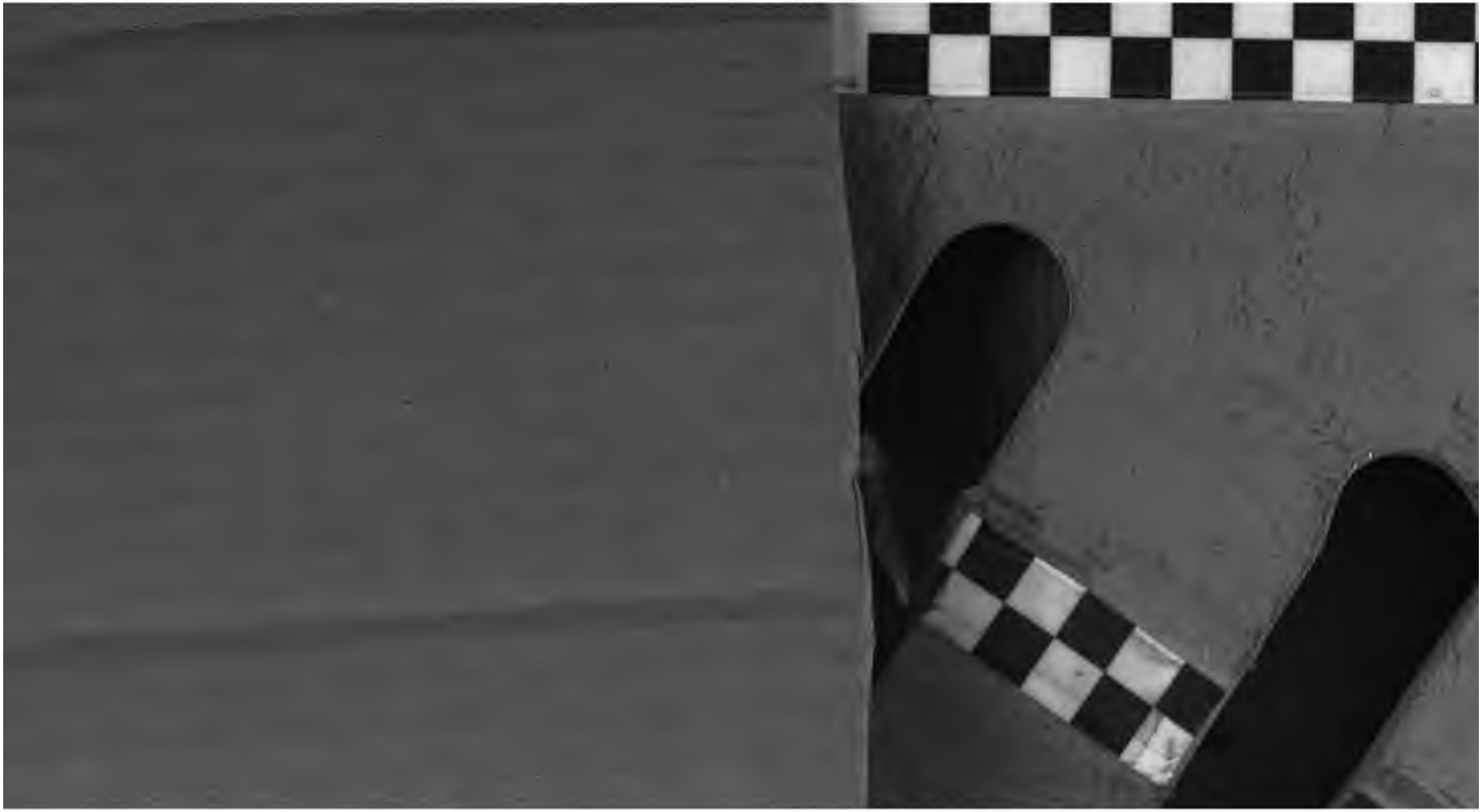
A task reluctantly undertaken is now fulfilled. I have shown that it is uncharitable and rash to decide in haste against the moral purposes of writers who have no object to deprave—I have shown the laws and examples which render justifiable in fiction, the delineations of crime—I have exposed the falsity of the charge so reiterated against myself, that habitually, and by preference, I have made criminals my heroes—I have shown that, out of sixteen fictions, to three only can this charge be applied. I have, I trust, made it manifest, that each of these three will bear the test of the strictest reference to the due restrictions to be placed upon their treatment and design; that no sophistry has been employed to vindicate the crime: that the crime has not been of that nature in which the narrative needs, or has found, inflammatory appeals to the more tempting passions—obtruding the presentation of licentious images, and clothing itself in a garb which rather allures than revolts; and, finally, I trust I have made it clear to the reader, that such stern and sombre subjects have not been undertaken without the befitting gravity of thoughtful and earnest purpose.

If I have not entered at length into the subjects of my other works, it is because such self-criticism would have been unpardonable.

tainment of which mention is made, but simply to show that, in the judgment of a very eminent critic, art finds in *distress* one ingredient of the sublime; and though, of course, an effect is not sublime because it is distressing, yet at least it is not an offence to art that the sensation of distress is occasioned. Though a writer may make no pretence to the sublime, he may still apply for such effects as his degrees of power permits him to produce to whatever are suggested as its sources. "Of *feeling*, little more can be said, than that the idea of bodily pain in all the modes and degrees of labor, pain, anguish, torment, is productive of the sublime, and nothing else in this sense can produce it."—Its strongest emotion (that of the sublime), is an emotion of distress, and no pleasure from a positive cause belongs to it."—BURKE *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, part ii., sect. 22.

unless for the imperative necessities of self-defence—each singly considered, their moral tendencies and objects have been tacitly admitted, or only vaguely assailed; and the reader will acknowledge, that in mainly confining myself to those works in which criminals have been made the predominant characters, I have fairly and honestly met the gravamen of the charge that has been urged against me. The rest of my writings, therefore, I confidently leave to the recollections of the general reader; and though, amongst works so numerous, commenced at so early an age, and comprehending delineations of life, with its manners and its passions, so widely various, there may occur, unavoidably, some errors of judgment, some passages too lightly considered,—(and what writer could bear a maligant research through more than forty volumes, made with a design of interpreting every sentence to the worst?)—yet I am convinced that the result of any candid survey would establish the fact, that all those works were conceived with the heartfelt desire to minister, however humbly, to truth and good, and executed with a reverent care to unsettle no man's mind as to the clear principles of religion—or the broad distinctions which the conscience has established between what we should aspire to, and what we should avoid.

This vindication, which, I think, has been conducted in that fair spirit of dispassionate argument which I prescribed to myself at the commencement, shall be sent to those whose charges, less temperately made, have called it forth. It is at their option to treat it with silence—or, if it so please them, in the same tone, and with recourse to the same arts, by which they have previously sought to pervert my meaning, and degrade my name: or why should I think so ill, even of enemies, as not to hope that some amongst them, at least, while retaining fairly their opinion of the literary demerits of my writings, may retract what alone I have the right to complain of—viz., heedless and unconsidered misstatements as to their honest tendency and design? Be this as it may—though the wrong that has been done me may not, and cannot, be readily and lightly repaired—though I am aware that many who never read my works have yet read, and may be long impressed by the attacks of their assailants—that many more, who have read both the works and the attacks will never read this explanation of the one and this reply to the other—nay, even though these pages, like the works that preceded them, may be garbled and distorted from their meaning,—yet I am immovably persuaded that, from few to more, from the segment to the circle, the main truths I have stated will gradually, but surely, penetrate and extend; and that, whatever literary faults and blemishes in my writings may be justly condemned, soon or late, the author will be held to have given an unanswerable vindication of the legitimate selection of his materials, and his conscientious sense of his more serious responsibilities.

END OF "LUCRETIA," AND "A WORD TO THE PUBLIC."

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